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The History of Fort Kearney

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

THE HISTORY OF FORT KEARNEY

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1938

CHAPTER I

Frontier Military Policy

Fort Kearney, on the Oregon Trail, was more than a military post; it was a most important factor in the settlement of the west. Past its protecting fortifications moved explorers, fur traders, army detachments, settlers, gold seekers and freighters. Trails from the east and south converged at its location, and during the later years of its life the Union Pacific Railroad skirted its northern boundary. During the twenty-three years of its existence it played an important part in the opening to settlement of the trans-Missouri and the Far West.

The fort was located at the southernmost point of the Platte River near the head of the Grand Island, three hundred sixteen miles from Independence, Missouri, and one hundred ninety miles west of the Missouri River. It was a place well known to travelers long before a military post was established there. It was recognized as important because the early trails came together at the point where the Platte River extended farthest south before swinging northeastward on its way to the Missouri River. Probably the first white men to travel over the eastern end of what later became the Oregon Trail and to pass near the place where the fort was later situated, were employees of the American Fur Company stationed

at Astoria, Oregon, and commonly known as the Astorians. Under Robert Stuart they set out overland from Astoria on June 29, 1812, for St. Louis and passed along the Platte route in the spring of 1813. Ten years later several parties of fur traders of the Rocky Mountain Fur Company, of St.Louis, traveled along the Platte. On April 10, 1830, Milton G. Sublette left St. Louis with ten loaded wagons and some twenty men for the Wind River, to engage in the fur trade. His was the first wheeled expedition to pass over the trail.[1] In the years immediately following, the trail became used extensively by traders and settlers moving westward.

While the explorers and fur traders were important in opening the way to the West, it was the settlers who made the Oregon Trail the great highway it became and it was largely for their protection that Fort Kearney and other military posts were established. As early as 1832 Congress had given thought to the protection of the frontier when it passed an act "to authorize the president to raise six companies of mounted rangers," each to be commanded by a captain and three lieutenants and to consist of one hundred enlisted men, the whole force to be in command of a major. Each enlisted man was to provide himself with a musket and a horse, for the use of which he was to receive one dollar per day. A total of $50,000 was appropriated for the execution of the act.[2]

On July 3, 1836, further protection was provided in an act authorizing the president "to cause to be surveyed and opened, a military road, from some point upon the right bank of the Mississippi River, between the mouth of the St. Peters and the mouth of the Desmoines River, upon such route as may appear best calculated to effect the purpose of this act, to the Red River." The act further specified that "military posts shall be constructed at such places along said road, as in the opinion of the president, may be most proper for the protection of the frontier, and for the preservation of necessary communication." An appropriation of $100,000 was made for carrying out these provisions.[3]

The War Department also recognized the need for more adequate protection of the frontier. Secretary John C. Spencer in his report of 1841 said, "As the white settlements advance, and as the Indians recede, it will be necessary to push these exterior posts further into the Indian country. But it is evident that such a line of posts would not accomplish all the objects which should be had in view in relation to the vast portion of our territory which extends from the lakes to the Gulf of Mexico. It is in immediate contact with numerous wild and warlike Indians, who are capable of bringing into the field a number of warriors estimated at from twenty to thirty thousand."[4] He characterized these Indiand "as formidable as any description of force that could be brought against us"

and urged that a chain of posts be established from the Council Bluffs to the mouth of the Columbia to command the north and south routes of the Indians and to "Maintain a communication with the territories belonging to us on the Pacific."[5]

A change in the Federal land laws made in the early eighteen forties brought about a large increase in the number of settlers moving westward and made frontier protection more important than ever. During this period a variety of causes prompted people to go west. Some left the place of their birth because of difficulties with neighbors or with the law, others because of restlessness or a spirit of adventure, and still others because they sought economic or social advantage which seemed attainable in a new country. Land hunger has been a characteristic of the American people since colonial days and many of the emigrants sought farms of their own. The vast public lands have always attracted this type of settler and from the day of the land warrants given by Congress as compensation to its soldiers after the Revolutionary War, the public lands have done much to shape the destiny of the republic. Large new areas of unoccupied lands were added to the public domain by reason of the acquisition of Louisiana in 1803, by the treaty of 1846 with Great Britain, giving undisputed claim to the Oregon Country as far north as the forty-ninth parallel, and by the treaty with Mexico in 1848, which added the extensive region of the southwest. Early settlements had poured into the eastern part of

the Louisiana territory and by 1840 settlers were pushing beyond the Missouri River.

At first the land policy of the Federal government was adverse to the interests of the individual with scant means to purchase a small acreage of the public lands for a home. Such purchases were hedged about by various restrictions which made it difficult to secure an eighty or a quarter section by a prospective homesteader.[6] This attitude on the part of the government met with opposition from the members of Congress from the West and gave rise to many fiery debates in both houses. On May 16, 1836, Senator Thomas Hart Benton of Missouri, on the floor of the United States Senate said, "It should be the policy of republics to multiply their freeholders as it is the policy of monarchies to multiply tenants. We are a republic, and we wish to continue so, then pass the public lands cheaply and easily into the hands of the people; sell for a reasonable price to those who are able to pay; and give without price to those who are not."[7] Thus was stated that which later became the land policy of the United States and caused large numbers of its citizens to leave the older settled parts and go forth into the unsettled regions to establish homes for themselves and their families.

But it was not until 1841 that the western senators and representatives were successful in securing the passage of a law which really made the public lands available to the

small owner. The Preemption Act of 1841, sponsored by Senator Benton, contained several provisions of importance to this type of land seeker. It enabled any citizen or person who had declared his intention of becoming one, to settle upon one hundred sixty acres or less of the public domain, provided that he did not hold title anywhere to three hundred twenty acres of land. If he built a dwelling thereon, thus indicating that the farm was to be his home, he could buy the tract at a later date at the minimum government price and with competition of others seeking to purchase it.[8] This was the first step in Benton's plan "to pass the public lands cheaply and easily into the hands of the people."

The act of 1841 gave added impetus to the movement of settlers westward, and especially to Oregon, making communication with the Pacific northwest particularly important at this time. The joint occupation plan with Great Britain was still in force and the United States was anxious to do all in its power to further its claim to the region. Maintenance of communication was, therefore, highly desirable and was contingent upon adequate defense of the frontier so that land communication might not be cut off. President Tyler, in his message to Congress December 6, 1842, said, "The suggestions in reference to the establishment of means of communication with our territories on the Pacific, and to surveys so essential to a knowledge of the intermediate country, are entitled

to the most favorable consideration."[9]

Two years later Secretary of War William Wilkins urged that a Nebraska territory be created extending from the mouth of the Kansas River north up the mouth of the Missouri to the mouth of the Running Water River, thence west to the Wind River chain to the mouth of the Arkansas River and from that point east along the Arkansas River back to the place of beginning on the Kansas. He pointed to the fertility of the soil in this region but more especially to the fact that "the limits of this territory include an excellent and more direct route to Oregon." He further stated that "a territorial organization of the country, and a military force placed there would no longer leave our title to the Oregon territory a barren or untenable claim. Its possession and occupancy would thenceforth not depend upon the naval superiority on the Pacific Ocean. Troops and supplies from the projected Nebraska territory would be able to contend for its possession with any force coming from the sea." To carry out the projects he advocated, the secretary recommended "an appropriation of $100,000 for erecting the military posts from the Missouri River to the Rocky Mountains."[10]

By 1845, largely as a result of the more liberal land laws of 1841, sufficient travel was passing over the Oregon Trail to cause President Polk to say in his message to Congress December 2, 1845, "For the protection of emigrants

whilst on their way to Oregon against the attacks of Indian tribes occupying the country through which they pass, I recommend that a suitable number of stockades and blockhouse forts be erected along the usual route between our frontier settlements on the Missouri and the Rocky Mountains; and that an adequate force of mounted riflemen be raised to guard and protect them on their journey. The immediate adoption of these recommendations will not violate the provisions of the existing treaty with Great Britain. It will be doing nothing more for American citizens than British laws have long since done for British subjects in the same territory. An overland mail route to Oregon is believed to be entirely practicable, and the importance of establishing such a mail, at least once a month, is submitted to the favorable consideration of Congress."[11]

Two reasons are therefore apparent for the establishment of a chain of military posts along the route to Oregon. First, such posts would insure communication with the northwest and thus strengthen our claim to Oregon and second, the large number of emigrants moving westward were in dire need of protection from Indian attack, and the garrisoning of such posts would insure their safety. While it is true that the Treaty of 1846 with Great Britain gave the United States undisputed claim to Oregon, and thereby nullified the argument for the strengthening of our claim to the region,

nevertheless full ownership of Oregon made more necessary than ever the protection of the Pacific routes. Also the need in the preceding years had focused attention upon the desirability of more adequate military protection and had awakened Congress to the urgency for the appropriations making such protection possible. The emigrant's need for protection became more important with each passing year. By 1848 this emigration had assumed such proportions as to make Fort Kearney and the other posts along the route absolutely necessary. Protection was essential, without it settlement would not have been possible, and without settlement the West could not have become a part of the American Commonwealth.

References

1. Ghent, William J., The Road to Oregon, pp. 18-21.
2. United States Statutes at Large, Vol. IV, p. 533.
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10. Ibid., 28 Cong, Second Sess., No. 2, Serial 463, pp. 124-125.
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Chapter II

Fort Kearney on the Missouri

At different times, two military posts in what is now the State of Nebraska, bore the name "Fort Kearney." The first was established in 1846 on the Missouri River, at the mouth of Table Creek, the present site of Nebraska City, in Otoe County. The second, the successor, was established in 1848, on the south bank of the Platte River, in Kearney County, eight miles south and east of the present city of Kearney, Nebraska. The second Fort Kearney was one hundred ninety miles west of the first and three hundred miles from Fort Leavenworth, Kansas.

To provide the necessary protection for settlers passing over the Oregon Trail and to maintain communication with Oregon, Congress had considered essential the establishment of military posts along the trail. The Act of July 2, 1836, provided that the location of the military posts contemplated should be made by the president.[1] President Van Buren delegated the actual selection of the site to a commission chosen from the officers stationed at Fort Leaven worth, the nearest fort to the frontier.[2] This commission consisted of Captain Nathan Boone and Colonel Stephen Watts Kearny, both of the First Regiment of Dragoons. It met at Fort Leavenworth on April 26, 1838, and agreed "upon an eminence near the mouth of Table Creek" on the Missouri River, at the present site

of Nebraska City. The reasons for selecting this site, as set forth in their report to Assistant Quartermaster General T. Cross, were two. First favorable physical conditions, in that there was an open level place sufficient for building and drill, and a large quantity of firewood nearby. There was also an abundance of fine building material, a good place for a ferry across the Missouri River, plenty of good corn and hay land, and "no lowlands near it and the place must be healthy;" Second, the post ought to be below the Platte River, and near enough both to frontier settlement and to the Pawnees "the most warlike and powerful nation in that section."[3] For these reasons the site on the west bank of the Missouri River, at the mouth of Table Creek, was chosen.

Owing to the decreased army appropriations, the post was not immediately built.[4] On December 5, 1840, however, Secretary of War Joel R. Poinsett recommended in his report for the year that two "forts should be constructed..., [one] at the head of navigation of the Kansas River, [and the other] northwest of Fort Leavenworth, at Table Creek on the Missouri, below the mouth of the Platte River. To connect this last post with Fort Snelling a fort ought to be constructed at or near the forks of the Des Moines."[5] Although the reason does not seem clear, nothing further was done toward the establishment of the post until March 6, 1846, when Major General Winfield Scott in Special Order No. 17 specified that, "A new military

post will be established on the Missouri River, near the mouth of Table Creek, as soon as the season for operations will permit. The site will be selected by Colonel Kearny of the First Dragoons."[6] On the same day the Adjutant General directed Colond Kearny to decide what defenses, quarters and barracks would be necessary, whether the garrison should consist of dragoons or infantry and how many companies of each. Direction was further given that "the greatest economy will be observed" in the building of the fort and that troops were to be used for labor.[7] Upon receipt of this order Colonel Kearny replied that since the post would be near the Oto, Pawnee, Pottowatomi and Sioux Indians, "and as it will most probably be the starting point from the Missouri River for the Oregon emigrants, it will be a permanent one." He was "of the opinion that it should be garrisoned by at least two companies of dragoons and two of infantry."[8]

Two days later Colonel Kearny learned that there were squatters at or near Table Creek "dealing in liquor with the Indians, and that all the timbered land near that point is claimed by squatters and whiskey dealers. A reserve is necessary on account of the timber required for building purposes and to control a ferry."[9] On April 9, 1846, less than four weeks after Colonel Kearny had dispatched his recommendation to the Adjutant General, President Polk "set aside from the public domain, at a point about where the present Nebraska City now stands, land for a military reservation and for a fort."[10] In 1846 this action ca

the part of the president was necessary to control undesirable squatters and to keep liquor out of the Indian country. Nine years later Secretary of War Jefferson Davis received strenuous protests from an entirely different type of squatter urging that the reservation be abandoned and that the land be opened for settlement.

In the spring of 1846, as soon as the weather permitted, troops were sent to Table Creek pursuant to General Scott's order of March 6. On May 12, First Lieutenant Andrew J. Smith left Fort Leavenworth "with thirty dragoons of Captain Benjamin D. Moore's company," and twenty additional horses for use in the work of construction. Colonel Kearny said that "he expected to go to Table Creek two or three times during the summer" to inspect the work.[11] Three days later, in company with Brigadier General George M. Brooke, he set out on board the steamboat "Amaranth" with Company C, First Regiment of Dragoons, and Company A, First United States Infantry, "to establish a new military post on the right bank of the Missouri River and at the mouth of Table Creek."[12]

Same par.

Major Clifton Wharton was in active command of the troops and was to remain with them in charge of the work at Table Creek. On the day of embarkation he wrote to the Adjutant General asking for a supply of blanks upon which to make his returns and also asking the name of the new post. He suggested that it be called Fort Nebraska or else Fort Macomb in honor of

the late General Macomb.[13] The detachments arrived at Table Creek on May 22 and shortly afterwards Colonel Kearny received orders from Headquarters, Western Division, to abandon the work at Table Creek and proceed at once to Fort Leavenworth from which place he was to set out for Santa Fe on an expedition in connection with the war with Mexico which had recently been declared. He left Major Wharton in command at Table Creek and proceeded to Fort Leavenworth, taking with him forty-five men.

The withdrawal of this contingent left Major Wharton with but "thirty-nine men and seven mechanics to erect the defenses, quarters etc. for the fort contemplated at this point and to furnish the necessary camp guard."[14] Obviously this force was insufficient for the work. Brigadier General Brooke, then commanding the Western Department with headquarters at St. Louis, recommended to the Adjutant General "that Prince's company at the new post fall back on Fort Leavenworth, bringing with them all the materials for the new work, awaiting a more propitious period for its construction."[15] On June 1 General Brooke ordered Lieutenants Smith and Prince back to Fort Leavenworth.[16] It is evident that General Brooke correctly anticipated the decision of Adjutant General Jones for he had already ordered the troops back to Fort Leavenworth, in fact three weeks before the Adjutant General's order was issued.

Lieutenant Prince and his command arrived at Fort Leavenworth on July 13, thus leaving the position at Table Creek unoccupied although work on the construction of quarters had been begun. In the correspondence and reports, little mention appears of a name for the new post, since it was usually designated as the "new post at Table Creek" or in some similar manner.[17] Major Wharton had, on May 15, the day of his departure for Table Creek, asked the War Department about a name for the new fort and has even suggested two possibilities. His suggestions, however, seem not to have been followed for by May 30 the new post was being referred to in the official correspondence as "Camp Kearny" in honor of Colonel Stephen Watts Kearny, who had selected the site.[18] Later correspondence used the name "Fort Kearney."

Owing to the Mexican War no further attempt was made until 1847 to provide more adequate protection for the frontier. Congress had, on May 19, 1846, approved an act which provided "for raising a regiment of mounted riflemen, and for establishing military stations on the route to Oregon." Military units at that time were smaller than at present since the regiment mentioned in the act was to consist of ten companies of four officers and seventy-six men each. It was, as in present organization, to be commanded by a colonel. The sum of $75,000 was appropriated for mounting and equipping the regiment, $3,000 "to defray the expenses of each military station" and

$3,000 "for making compensation to the Indian which may own or possess the ground on which the said station may be erected and for each station."[19]

Since all of the forces of the regular army were required in the Mexican War, it was necessary for the Federal government to call upon the several states for additional troops. These troops were mustered into Federal service for the duration of the war. On June 1, 1847, Secretary of War William L. Marcy, in a letter to Adjutant General Jones said, "With a view to carrying into effect the provisions of the sixth section of the Act of May 19, 1846, a requisition has been made upon the State of Missouri for one battalion [five companies] of Mounted Volunteers, to be employed in establishing the military stations, contemplated by said act, on the line of communication with Oregon. These stations for the present will be limited to two, the first near the Grand Island where the road to California encounters the Platte River, and the second at or near Fort Laramie."[20] It will be observed that the site on the Missouri River at Table Creek was not included, but that a post was to be established on the Platte River instead.

~~Back~~ In 1838, when Colonel Kearny and Captain Boone selected the site on the Missouri at Table Creek, very little emigration was moving westward. The land laws were unfavorable to the person desiring a small holding of the public domain, and the economic life of the east had not yet had time to feel

the full effect of the Panic of 1837. Nearly all the travel westward at that time was by trappers and fur traders, such as Manuel Lisa, who went on a fur trading expedition up the Missouri River from St. Louis every spring from 1807 to 1819, and others, who used the river rather than go overland. It was natural that Colonel Kearny should assume that settlers would follow the same route. He did not foresee that the emigration was to be ox drawn rather than water borne, even when there were navigable streams part way. Moreover, at the mouth of Table Creek, the Missouri River could, at most seasons, be easily crossed which would probably invite overland migration to come there. In fact many of the same considerations which later caused Council Bluffs, on the Missouri but fifty miles north, to be designated as the eastern terminus of the Union Pacific railroad, prompted Colonel Kearny to select the site he did for the fort.

Nor was Colonel Kearny alone in his opinion regarding the proper place for the post. In the fall of 1847 Major Clifton Wharton wrote to Adjutant General Jones, "You intimate that Fort Kearney is not on the route the Oregon emigrants take. The Missouri River is crossed by these people at very many points, and from some experience and much information from others, I am satisfied that a better starting point for the troops could not be selected. It should be observed by the Department of War, that many local causes will influence opinions

in the new and prosperous portion of the country, such as ferry privileges, contracts for supplies of all sorts, etc., and therefore caution should be exercised in adopting measures on the suggestion of persons not well known to the Government."[21] Later migration amply justified the change in location from the Missouri River to the Platte River, but for several years prior to the change the most suitable location was largely a matter of opinion.

Some difficulty was experienced in the raising of the battalion of mounted volunteers requested from the State of Missouri. The requisition was made prior to June 1, 1847, but the summer was well advanced before these troops were available. As late as August the troops were not yet ready because of delay in the election of a Lieutenant Colonel." Finally this obstacle was overcome by the election of Ludwig E. Powell to the command but it was not until September 5 that the detachment consisting of fourteen officers and four hundred sixty-four men left Fort Leavenworth, arriving at Table Creek ten days later, when Lieutenant Colonel Powell assumed command of the post.[22] Approaching winter made it impossible to proceed to the Grand Island. So the War Department, upon recommendation of Major Wharton, ordered that the detachment winter at Table Creek and proceed to the Grand Island in the spring.[23] Two months after issuing the order, however, Adjutant General Jones sent a letter

to Major Wharton at Fort Leavenworth inquiring whether it would not be better to winter the "Missouri Battalion of Volunteers" there instead of at Table Creek.[24] Major Wharton replied that Lieutenant Colonel Powell had reported that he could accomodate his battalion comfortably at Table Creek. Colonel Powell further reported that "there are already some 60 good substantial log cabins with straw and dirt roofs nearly completed, and my entire command will, in a very short time, be in comfortable quarters." Since this was the case he (Wharton) "did not deem it necessary or proper to make any change for the winter in the location of the Missouri Volunteers."[25]

A week after Lieutenant Colonel Powell and his detachment arrived at Table Creek, Lieutenant Daniel P. Woodbury of the Engineer Corps was sent with five officers and seventy-six men to the Grand Island on the Platte River where he "examined the ground and resources of the country and selected the site of a military station."[26] Since winter was fast approaching he remained at the Grand Island only a short time, returning to Fort Kearney on October 23.[27]

Lieutenant Colonel Powell, of the Missouri Volunteers, had been at Fort Kearney but a short time when friction developed between himself and the officers of the regular army, and especially with Major Clifton Wharton. Disagreement between these officers resulted from Colonel Powell's distribution of his troops. He had sent a large detachment on the Sioux

expedition, and had sent Lieutenant Woodbury to Washington. Major Wharton complained that Colonel Powell had "distributed his command to a degree to retard the advancement even of temporary accomodations,"[28] since he (Powell) had sent detachments against the Sioux Indians when all of his men should have been kept at the post building quarters, and that "one of those detachments has recently returned... and as I expected, without seeing an Indian."[29] Of Lieutenant Woodbury having been sent to Washingtom he wrote bitterly, "Lieutenant Colonel Powell, I learn also, has ordered Lieutenant Woodbury, of the Engineers, to Washingtom without consulting me, for what, doubtless, Lieutenant Woodbury will be able to inform you."[30] There seems to be no evidence that Colonel Powell retaliated in any way, at least his correspondence with the War Department shows no evidence of it. He did, however, have no hesitation in expressing his opinion concerning military matters to the officials at Washington. On January 24, 1848, he wrote to Secretary of War William L. Marcy concerning the matter of the $2,000 appropriated in the Act of May 19, 1846, for the purchase of land from Indian tribes at the new military posts to be established. He said that he thought the appropriation "ought to be expended in the purchase of Indian goods suited to the taste and wants of the Indians," "instead of given to them in money. Money would do them no good since they did not know its value and would be beaten out of it by sharpers. He further

stated "that with $500 in goods judiciously selected, I can procure more territory than with the $2,000."[31]

Post returns show that the winter at Table Creek passed quietly. The blanks upon which the commanding officers made their monthly reports or returns to the Adjutant General's office, had in the lower right hand corner a space for "remarks" in which important or interesting happenings were to be listed. The post returns from Fort Kearney for this period, as carefully preserved in the Adjutant General's office at Washington, have few entries in this space. There were twenty-five officers and four hundred sixty men at the post during that time but little of sufficient interest happened to be included in the "remarks" on the returns. Such items as, one private deserted on the last day of the year but "was apprehended at Mormon City, Upper Missouri, [part of the present city of Omaha] on January 17, 1848,"[32] or, in February a Sergeant Major was sent on an expedition to Fort Leavenworth,[33] or on March 12 the commanding officer returned to Missouri for a short stay during which time Captain James Craig assumed temporary command,[34] indicate that nothing more important happened which deserved notice on the return. Thus is shown the even tenor of life at the post during the winter while the troops were waiting for spring and new adventure on the Platte.

After having been used as winter quarters for the Missouri Volunteers in 1847-1848, Fort Kearney on the Missouri was not

again used as a station for troops. Early in 1849 a recommendation was made by Captain C.F. Ruff, commanding officer at Fort Kearney on the Platte, that "the public property at Fort Kearney [on the Missouri] be placed in charge of a citizen in the employ of the Assistant Quartermaster General."[35] This was done and notation of the payment of $10 per month for this service appears on subsequent returns.

With the creation of the Territory of Nebraska in 1854 white settlement was permitted in that region which had been hitherto known as the "Indian Country" and in which settlement had been prohibited. Very quickly the old site of Fort Kearney on the Missouri attracted settlers and by December, 1854, a settlement known as Nebraska City had sprung up there. The old block house of the post was in "a good state of repair and worth $500"... and was "being used for the office of the Nebraska City News, a Fusion Abolition press."[36] By the following year the town had grown considerably and its citizens were very much alarmed by rumors that the War Department was about to oust the settlers from the military reservation. On May 9, 1855, Mark W. Izard, Governor of the Territory, and James Bradley, Associate Justice of the territorial Supreme Court, wrote a letter to Secretary of War Jefferson Davis. They pointed out that the site of the military reservation had been selected "as a town site called Nebraska City and settled by a number of enterprising citizens, who, by their almost superhuman

exertion have made it by far the most flourishing and populous town in the territory." Rumors had been heard that the War Department was about to oust the settlers from their homes but that they "could not believe for the moment that the Government will sacrifice these worthy men" and that they "would respectfully suggest that a recommendation be made to Congress... urging the passage of an act for the relief of a class of citizens which they deem worthy of the highest consideration, authorizing them to purchase the land at the usual Government price."[37] A short time later the War Department turned the reservation over to the Department of the Interior and the land comprising the old fort site was formally offered for sale.

~~Nothing~~ Little remains of the former post to indicate its location. On the site once occupied by Old Fort Kearney on the Missouri stands Nebraska City, the seat of Otoe County, Nebraska.

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2. Kearney and Boone to Cross, April 15, 1838.

   Note - The letters and post returns concerning Fort Kearney on the Missouri are in the files of the Adjutant General's Office, State, War and Navy Building, Washington, D.C., and were examined at that place in February, 1933.
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4. Ibid.
5. Executive Documents, 26th Cong., 2nd Sess., No. 2. Serial No. 382, p. 22.
6. Orders, Old Files Division, A. G. O.
7. Jones to Kearney, Mar. 6, 1846.
8. Kearney to Jones, Mar. 15, 1846.
9. Ibid, Mar. 17, 1846.
10. Old Files Division, A. G. O.
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12. Ibid., May 20, 1846.
13. Wharton to Jones, May 16, 1846.
14. Wharton to Jones, May 30, 1846.
15. Brooke to Jones, June 1, 1846.
16. Brooke to Kearney, June 1, 1846.
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18. Wharton to Jones, op. cit., May 30, 1846.

19. United States Statutes at Large, Vol. IX, pp. 13-14.
20. Marcy to Jones, June 1, 1847.
21. Wharton to Jones, Oct. 27, 1847.
22. Post Returns, Fort Kearney, September, 1847.
23. Jones to Wharton, Aug. 20, 1847.
24. Ibid., Oct. 13, 1847.
25. Wharton to Jones, Nov. 6, 1847.
26. Woodbury to Totten, Nov. 2, 1847.
27. Post Returns, Fort Kearney, October 1847.
28. Wharton to Jones, op. cit., Oct. 27, 1847.
29. Ibid., Nov. 18, 1847.
30. Ibid.,
31. Powell to Marcy, Jan. 24, 1848.
32. Post Returns, Fort Kearney, January 1848.
33. Ibid., February 1848.
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36. Brown to Davis, Dec. 13, 1854.
37. Izard and Bradley to Davis, May 9, 1855.

CHAPTER III

Reconnaissance

Little was known of the region between the Missouri River and the Rocky Mountains until the surveys of the forties. The country was occupied by Indians and few white men had yet visited this vast extent of territory. The fur traders who had traversed the region had given some information of the country passed through but since these expeditions were primarily concerned with fur trade and only incidently with exploration, their accounts were meager. Because of this lack of information, Colonel J.J. Abert, commanding the Corps of Topographical Engineers, recommended on January 15, 1842, that one intermediate post be established between Council Bluffs and the Rocky Mountains. He said, "In my judgement, there should be but one such post at present, which should ... be of sufficient strength to command the respect of the numerous and warlike tribes of its vicinity, and to operate as a moral as well as physical protection to the settlements ... From this post detachments should be sent to examine the country between the Missouri and Rocky Mountains, and through the same, for the purpose of determining the positions for additional posts, which could be established at any future day, as suitable positions were ascertained."[1]

Therefore, in 1842, Captain John C. Fremont, of the Topographical Engineers, was sent on an expedition to the

Rocky Mountains and beyond to make surveys to supplement those of Lieutenant Zebulon Pike, 1806-07, and Major Stephen H. Long, 1823. Neither Pike nor Long had gone far enough north to reach the Platte region but Fremont took a route which extended along the Platte River. On June 27, 1843, he camped at or near the later site of Fort Kearney. In his official report he says, "The animals were somewhat fatigued by their march of yesterday, and, after a short journey of eighteen miles along the river bottom, I encamped near the head of the Grand Island, in longitude, by observation, 99° 05' 24", latitude 40° 39' 32". The soil here was light but rich, though in some places rather sandy; and with the exception of a scattered fringe along the bank, the timber consisting principally of poplar, elm and hackberry, is confined almost entirely to the islands."[2] Later Fremont recommended the position as the site for a fort "by reason of nearness to timber on the Grand Island."[3]

In the summer of 1845 Colonel Stephen Watts Kearny left Fort Leavenworth with a detachment of some two hundred fifty men from the First Regiment of Dragoons, for the Rocky Mountains. "It was a well mounted and equipped regiment that departed from Fort Leavenworth on the clear morning of May 18th. The dragoons armed with carbines, pistols, and cartridges presented a genuine military appearance. Such officers as Cooke, Burgwin, Turner, and Moore had become

veterans of many western campaigns. Two mountain howitzers and seventeen camp wagons stocked with supplies and provisions lumbered and rattled in the rear of the column."[4] The expedition pas ed along the Big Blue river and reached the head of the Grand Island, Platte River, "on May 31, having marched the distance of 273 miles in 13 days. The command remained in the camp on the 30th."[5] At this camp on the last day of the month, Colonel Kearny made up his post return here for the month of May. He reported his detachment as consisting of Companies A, C, F, G, and K of the First Dragoons, with sixteen officers and two hundred fifty-two men present. Company F was commanded by Lieutenant Philip Kearny, a nephew of Stephen Watts Kearny, who later served with distinction in the Civil War and for whom Fort Phil Kearny, Wyoming, was named. The return was received by the Adjutant General's office at Washington on July 13, 1845.[6] The expedition remained at the head of the Grand Island but one day. It continued on westward along the platte River, past the forks and to the South Pass where it turned south to the Arkansas River and followed that stream eastward arriving at Fort Leavenworth on August 24. It was on the march ninety-nine days and covered a distance of 2,200 miles, without the loss of a man.

In his report for 1845, Secretary of War William L. Marcy said of the work of the expedition, "The presence of so fine a body of troops among the numerous bands of Indians

scattered through that extensive region, cannot have failed to make salutary impressions upon them. In various 'talks' with them they were distinctly told 'that the road made by the dragoons must not be closed by the Indians, and that the white people traveling on it must not be disturbed in their persons or property.' They were gratified by some small presents distributed among them, and assured of the friendship of the United States so long as they conducted themselves in a peaceable and proper manner towards the white men and each other. While on the 'Oregon Trail' the dragoons fell in with several parties of emigrants. The whole number passing, this season (1845), into that territory by that route was ascertained to be 850 men, 475 women, and 1,000 children, taking with them 7,000 head of cattle, 400 horses and mules, and 460 wagons."[7] Thus, protection for the emigrants was uppermost in the minds of the government officials at all times and their ultimate welfare was the principal reason for sending out this expedition.

The next expedition to survey the country of which the Platte River was a part was that of Lieutenant Daniel P. Woodbury, of the Engineer Corps, who was sent by Lieutenant Colonel Powell, from Fort Kearney on the Missouri, to select a site for the new post on the Platte. The Missouri Volunteers, to whom Lieutenant Woodbury was attached, did not arrive at Fort Kearney on the Missouri in time to continue on to the Platte in 1847 but wintered at the former place instead.

Lieutenant Woodbury, pursuant to Lieutenant Colonel Powell's orders, left the post on the Missouri River "on the 23rd of September in company with Dr. Snail, Assistant Surgeon, and with an escort of 70 men, nearly one company of mounted troops furnished by Colonel Powell . . . Captain Andrew W. Sublette in command of the escort,"[8] to examine the ground and resources of the country and select a site for the new military station. His report, preserved in the Mail and Record Section, Office of the Chief of Engineers, War Department, at Washington, and written in his own hand, tells of his departure from Fort Kearney on the Missouri, with an escort of seventy men, commanded by Captain Sublette, and how they "set out upon an untried and unknown route with a view of striking the Platte at the foot of Grand Island." They were guided in their direction by the dividing ridges and crossed the Saline, "a considerable stream of brackish water," at a point fifty miles out from the Missouri River. After crossing several branches of the Saline they struck, eighty-seven miles out, "a beautiful dividing ridge, fifty miles long, ending with the bluffs of the Platte."

The Platte River was reached about a "mile below a well wooded island three miles long, properly the foot of Grand Island." The term "Grand Island" was used for convenience although there was "no such thing as any one great island, there are two or more wide islands running side by side and smaller

ones innumerable." At the lower end of the island was a considerable body of trees near the south shore, which was a part of a wooded strip running along the whole island. South of it were many small islands covered with young willow and cottonwood but across the channel on the south side there was not even enough wood to supply fuel for the emigrants or troops. Wood for this purpose had to be secured from adjacent islands by fording some narrow bayou.

He further pointed out that the great Oregon and California road from Independence comes into the river about forty miles from the foot of the island and one hundred eighty miles from Fort Kearney on the Missouri. A thorough investigation of the island and the adjacent ground was made. It was near this point that the War Department had directed that the first military station between the Missouri River and the Rocky Mountains be located. The river was found to consist of " a main center channel about three quarters of a mile wide" with "a prairie island bottom nearly one and one half miles wide on each side of it, a bayou from 125 to 150 yards wide on the south side, and a wooded strip about one half mile wide on the north side." A wooded strip three or four miles from the south shore continuing to the foot of the island some forty miles down the river contained all the wood that could be relied upon for building purposes. The best wood seen upon the river was located on this wooded strip and the demand for

timber first and fuel afterwards made it necessary to locate the fort near this timber supply. "The trees on Grand Island are cottonwood, scrub elm, small willows, and scattering ash and a very few cedars. The cottonwood is the only tree that grows in any abundance and on this alone we must rely for timber. This too is generally scrubby. The tall, slender and straight cottonwood so common on the Missouri River and so good for building purposes is never seen upon the Platte. There the trunks are large, short and crooked, the branches large, numerous and far spreading. Trunks twenty feet long are nearly two feet in diameter at the ground. We cannot safely adopt, as a common dimension, a length greater than 20 feet."

With the timber supply in mind Lieutenant Woodbury, with the concurrence of Dr. Snail, the medical officer attached to the escort, located the post opposite the group of "wooded islands 17 miles from the turn off to Independence, 317 miles from Independence, about 300 miles from Fort Leavenworth, 197 miles from Fort Kearney on the Missouri, and two or three miles from the head of the group or head of Grand Island." "The site," he continued, "should have a central position in relation to the timber. It must be about two thirds of a mile from the nearest bayou, for it must be on the hard dry bottom which terminates about one half mile from that bayou. Its exact position along the river, for three fourths of a mile, is

not important, and may be determined better in the spring, when the effect of high water, on the lower bottom and on the roads to the islands, will be seen. The site may be assumed as level. It rises, however, gently to the south and the ground continues rising nearly to the bluffs distant two miles. The site is never overflowed: its plain is about 10 feet above the river low water and at that depth, water in any desired quantity may be obtained." Only one objection to the site was spoken of: "in connection with the site, there is, unfortunately, between it and the river, at nearly midway, a wet slough filled with high grass, weeds and flags, a slough which cannot be avoided, for with one short break it extends four or five miles both up and down the river. This evil may be left to the permanent garrison to remove. It will diminish with the cultivation of the adjacent grounds. In the opinion of the medical officer it will have no bad effect upon the healthiness of the post since it lies on the north side of it while the prevailing winds of the sickly season come from southerly directions."[9]

Not only did Lieutenant Woodbury carefully examine the site for the proposed fort, but he also made extended observation of the surrounding country. "The soil of the Platte is sandy. Forty-two miles from this place I saw for the first and last time sandstone, cropping out on a bluff near one of the forks of the Saline. West of that place the surface of

the country exhibits, though very slowly, increasing quantities of sand. The bed of the river is whitish sand. The bottoms, at many places examined, are nearly pure sand below the surface stratum. This stratum is sometimes two or three inches deep, and consists of sand, clay and gravel in varying proportions. In almost all cases the proportion of sand is too great or the stratum too thin for bricks, either common or sun-dried. There is, however, six or seven miles west of the site, a deep and extensive stratum of which common bricks of medium quality may probably be made, and another stratum of the same character, some fifteen inches deep, near the site. Captain Sublette thinks that both of these strata will make good sundried bricks and that the climate will justify their use." Owing to the scarcity of suitable timber for building it is not surprising that Lieutenant Woodbury would be especially interested in the prospect of making brick, for upon his shoulders rested the responsibility for constructing the necessary buildings for the new post. It was necessary that he use whatever material was at hand for transportation any distance was out of the question, owing to the enormous expense involved.

The banks of the Platte, he stated, were very low, from five to seven feet, but that the low bottom presented no appearance of being overflowed, an important factor in the selection of a site where troops were to be stationed.

Lieutenant Woodbury did not think that the fertility of the soil along the Platte was equal to that along the Missouri, but in spite of its inferiority was "abundantly sufficient for all the demands of a garrison and emigrants and other travelers." There was plenty of grass on the island prairies, some of which would produce two to three tons per acre, and even as late as October was in good condition to cut for hay. This was of the utmost importance in locating the fort, for the troops to be stationed there would be mounted, and a large tonnage of hay would be needed each winter. He also observed that "the natural fertility of the lower bottoms is greatly increased by the extraordinary irrigation supplied by the river. In the spring when the snow melts upon the mountains the river is high and the water percolating freely through the sand underlying the adjacent ground renders it soft and moist, in many cases, to the very surface. This irrigation is gradually withdrawn in summer and early fall as the harvest season approaches. In fact that season must depend much upon the irrigation and therefore vary much with the elevation of the bottom. It is therefore not surprising that we should find green grass on the Platte four weeks later than at other places." With both hay and grass assured the site seemed favorable and Lieutenant Woodbury was of the opinion that, even by the next year, "all the forage and subsistence required by the garrison and by the emigrants" could be raised

if proper measures were taken.

"There is every reason to believe that the station in question will add much to the security of the Oregon road", writes Woodbury "and gradually overcome the audacity of the Indians - Pawnees and Sioux - mostly Pawnees - who now infest it. Its situation in relation to the Pawnees is excellent - being intermediate between their villages where they spend five months of the year - the spring and autumn - and their hunting grounds, the Platte, the tributaries of the Kansas, and the Arkansas - where they spend the remaining seven months - women, children and all. With these incumbrances they will be completely in our power for going in one body as they do they can never escape a mounted force." Developments later proved the accuracy of these deductions.

His generosity toward the officers of the Missouri Volunteers is in striking contrast to the attitude of Major Clifton Wharton toward Lieutenant Colonel Powell. In his report to the Chief of Engineers he pays compliment to the ability of Captain Andrew W. Sublette, "I regard myself as fortunate in the selection of that officer to command the escort. In connection with an Indian trading company he has lived many years upon the mountains, traveled often along the Platte, is familiar with the timber and other resources and characteristics of that river, well versed in woodcraft and in knowledge of the Indian character and habits. He is

familiar with adobe work and has put up several buildings of that material. I found him at all times more than ready to lend me every assistance and we frequently benefitted by his information and judgement."

After a month on the Platte at the head of the Grand Island making his observations, Lieutenant Woodbury returned to Fort Kearney on the Missouri. There he wrote his report of the expedition, and in the spring of the following year (1848) went again to the site on the Platte to supervise the construction of the buildings at the new post.[10]

References

Note - Lieutenant Woodbury's report of Nov. 10, 1847, to Colonel Joseph G. Totten, Chief of Engineers, is in the Mail and Record Section, Office of the Chief of Engineers, Munitions Building, Washington, D. C., and was examined at that place in February, 1933.

1. Reports of the Committees of the House of Representatives, 27th Cong., 3rd Sess., Serial No. 426, Vol. I, No. 31, p. 45.
2. Senate Exec. Docs., 29th Cong., 1st Sess., Serial No. No. 166, p. 17.
3. Data compiled Aug. 1, 1929. Old Files Division, A.G.O.
4. Pelzer, Louis, Marches of the Dragoons in the Mississippi Valley, p. 130.
5. Post Return, Camp near Head of Grand Island, Platte River, for month of May, 1845. Returns Section, A.G.O.
6. Ibid.
7. House Exec. Docs., 29th Cong., 1st Sess., Serial No. 480 No. 2, p. 196.
8. Woodbury to Totten, Nov. 10, 1847.
9. Ibid.
10. Ibid., November 2, 1847.

CHAPTER IV

From Fort Kearney on the Missouri to Fort Kearney on the Platte

During the early winter of 1847-1848, at Fort Kearney on the Missouri, Lieutenant Colonel Ludwig E. Powell and Lieutenant Daniel P. Woodbury held several conferences, before the latter left for Washington, about the work to be done at the new post on the Platte River the following spring. Colonel Powell's battalion of Mounted Volunteers had been requisitioned from the State of Missouri and mustered into Federal service for the specific purpose of establishing "military stations on the line of communication with Oregon"[1] and Lieutenant Woodbury had been detailed to the battalion as engineer officer in actual charge of the work of construction.

As a result of these conferences Lieutenant Woodbury, who meanwhile had gone to Washington, wrote to Colonel Joseph G. Totten, Chief of Engineers, on December 9, 1847, requesting an appropriation of $15,000 for each of the two military stations contemplated. The officers of the Missouri Battalion and Lieutenant Woodbury were convinced of the necessity for the appropriation because "the contemplated stations are to be permanent. They are of unquestioned importance, not only for the security of the Oregon road, but for the tranquility of the neighboring Indians - the Pawnees and Sioux, by far the most numerous, powerful and troublesome of all the

northern tribes. Remote from the settlements they must not only be strong within themselves, but contain ample store rooms for subsistence, forage, ammunition, etc."[2] Additional expense would also be incurred on account of necessary tools and machinery, and for the employment of mechanics and master workmen. Even though Lieutenant Woodbury considered the Missouri Volunteers equal to any volunteers in willingness to work, he felt that a number of mechanics and master workmen would be necessary if the work were to be completed within reasonable time. For, he observed, "it is particularly hard to obtain work from mounted troops - even regulars - for their horses require much of their time and care."[3]

The problem of supplies for the new fort next engaged Lieutenant Woodbury's attention while in Washington. On December 11, 1847, he wrote a second letter to Colonel Totten suggesting "the expediency of employing some farmers to go out to Grand Island on the Platte early in the ensuing spring to cultivate the ground in the vicinity of the contemplated military station so as to furnish next year and thereafter the subsistence and forage required at the station."[4] He pointed out that the station was more than 300 miles from Fort Leavenworth and that, if supplies could not be raised near at hand, they would have to be hauled from there at very great expense - an expense which he considered unnecessary beyond the first year. He thought farmers could be easily

secured. "There is now at Council Bluffs on the Missouri River, about 200 miles from the contemplated station, a large body of Mormons, industrious, hard working people - on their way to California - now delayed by want of means. I have recently conversed with one of their chief men who assured me that his people would readily come into some arrangement or agreement to cultivate the land in question to any desired extent, and that they would go out to Grand Island early in March, so as to raise not only corn, but wheat, oats, etc., the first year."[5] The suggestion was not then followed, but it was a sound one nevertheless, and in later years farmers were permitted to settle on the military reservation near the fort for the very reason set forth in the letter.

Just before leaving Washington in March to return to Fort Kearhey, Lieutenant Woodbury requested authority from the War Department to use certain materials than at Fort Kearney on the Missouri. These consisted of "a large quantity of ready made doors and window-sashes, shingles, pine boards,etc., "which had not been used owing to the outbreak of the war with Mexico and the subsequent change in location of the fort to the Platte, but which were suitable for use "at the contemplated stations on the route to Oregon, to which they may nearly all be applied with great advantage."[6]

On April 28, 1848, Lieutenant Colonel Powell left Fort Kearney on the Missouri with a detachment of eighteen officers

and three hundred seventy-five men, for the site of the new post at the head of the Grand Island on the Platte River.[7] Lieutenant Woodbury remained at the old site on the Missouri with a detachment of five companies, consisting of five officers and seventy-three men.[8] Lieutenant Colonel Powell arrived at the Grand Island on June 1 with his detachment,[9] Lieutenant Woodbury reaching there with three companies the next day, the remaining "two in the rear escorting the train," came later.[10] With the arrival of this last detachment, twenty-three officers and four hundred forty-eight men were at the new post on the Platte.

No name had yet been selected for the new military establishment. It was referred to as the "new post at the head of the Grand Island," as the "first Military Station on the Route to Oregon," or in some similar manner. In his letter, June 3, 1848, to Colonel Totten, reporting his arrival at the Platte, Lieutenant Woodbury proposed the name "Fort Childs," in honor of his father-in-law, "Brevet Brigadier General Thomas Childs, who distinguished himself in the Seminole War about the year 1840, and in the Mexican War. It was never officially named Fort Childs by any competent authority of the War Department."[11] It was, however, commonly referred to as such during the year 1848 both in the official correspondence and in the post returns.

Work was immediately begun on the new quarters with a detail of one hundred seventy-five men "employed mainly as follows: 20 men moulding and burning bricks, 60 men moulding adobes, 25 men working as carpenters, at the saw mill and getting out timber, 20 men building a sod stable, top boarded and covered with hard rammed earth, and 50 men hauling and laying adobes."[13] Progress was slow, however, because of continued rain and "early in July the battalion received news of the treaty of peace, and the work performed, which was very trifling before, has been lessening every day since."[14] By the end of October but "one sod building containing four rooms for temporary officers quarters" was finished.[15] It is not surprising that a history of the period, written forty years later, stated, "the volunteer battalion camped at the place designated [the head of the Grand Island], without erecting quarters, and when relieved about the first of November, by two companies of mounted riflemen... the difficult task of building quarters for the garrison, without brick or lumber, in the cold and snows of winter," devolved upon the newcomers.

The land upon which "Fort Childs" was located had originally belonged to the Pawnee Indians. By the Treaty of 1833 they had ceded the land south of the Platte to the United States, and had agreed to move to the north side of the river. Owing, however, to the hostility of the Sioux, with whom there had for a long time been dispute about

overlapping hunting grounds, the Pawnees had not moved north of the Platte as agreed. It was thought that, when troops were brought into the region to protect them from the Sioux, they would move north of the Platte and away from the emigrant trails.[16] Even should this be the case title to the land on the north side of the river, needed by the new fort because of the timber there, would remain in the Pawnees. Accordingly, on August 6, 1848, at Fort Childs, a new treaty was entered into "Between Lieutenant Colonel Ludwig E. Powell, commanding Battalion of Missouri Mounted Volunteers, enroute to Oregon, in behalf of the United States, and the chiefs and headmen of the four confederated bands of Pawnees, viz: Grand Pawnees, Pawnee Loups, Pawnee Republicans, and Pawnee Tappage, at present residing on the south side of the Platte River."[17]

By its terms the Pawnees, for $2,000 in goods and merchandise paid them through Captain Stewart Van Vleet, Assistant Quartermaster at Fort Childs, ceded to the United States, "all that tract of land, commencing on the south side of the Platte River five miles west of this post, 'Fort Childs'; thence due north to the crest of the bluffs north of said Platte River, thence east and along the crest of said bluffs to the termination of Grand Island, supposed to be about 60 miles distant; thence south to the southern shore of said Platte River, thence west and along the southern shore of said Platte River to the place of the beginning." The United States was also given the right to use any hard wood situated

along Wood River to the north of the land ceded. The Pawnees promised further "not to molest or injure the property or person of any white citizen of the United States, wherever found, nor to make war upon any tribes with whom said Pawnee tribes now are, or may hereafter be, at peace; but should any difficulty arise, they agree to refer the matter in dispute to such arbitration as the President of the United States may direct."[18]

There had been considerable trouble with the Indians during the season of 1848 and a number of emigrant trains had been attacked. Travel was heavy over the trail, forty wagons passed the day the Missouri Volunteers reached Fort Childs, and the roads showed that many hundred had passed before the troops arrived.[19] The Sioux were the worst offenders and directly or indirectly were responsible for most of the mischief. They had driven the Otoes and the Missourias out of the regions north of the Platte and had kept them on the south side where hunting was not so good and where they "had only small patches of farm land."[20] The Pawnees likewise were unable to go north of the Platte and Indian Agent Thomas Fitzpatrick, of St. Louis, believed that their depredations were caused by the oppression of the Sioux, which made them destitute of food.[21] Lieutenant Woodbury reported on his arrival at Fort Childs that "the Pawnees so far have behaved remarkably well, bringing up stray cattle,

horses, etc."[22] Late in August Lieutenant Colonel Powell sent a large detachment on an unnecessary expedition to the Pawnee villages because two officers, not having an interpreter, had misunderstood MA-Laigne, principal chief of the Confederated Bands of Pawnee. They understood that the Pawnees had taken the warpath against the whites when, in reality, he was attempting to tell them that a Pawnee brave had murdered his wife.[23]

On August 14, 1848, Congress approved an act providing for the discharge of troops enlisted for the Mexican War.[24] This affected the Missouri Volunteers at Fort ~~Childs~~ who received orders to repair to Fort Leavenworth for discharge from Federal service. On September 15, Companies I and G, of the Regiment of Mounted Riflemen, under command of Captain Charles F. Ruff, left St. Louis for Fort ~~Childs~~. They stopped en route at Fort Leavenworth and arrived at Fort ~~Childs~~ Kearney on October 28, having marched the distance of thres hundred miles from Fort Leavenworth in thirteen days. Lieutenant Colonel Powell and his battalion had already departed, leaving a garrison of but one lieutenant and eighteen privates at the fort. Ordered to Fort Leavenworth by Captain Ruff they departed for that place on October 30, leaving the Rifles to garrison the post.[25]

Three days after his arrival at his new station, Captain Ruff reported to Adjutant General Jones that, "Our

situation at this post will be for this winter one of extreme hardship and I fear much suffering, we have our shelters yet to erect both for men and horses and the weather already exceedingly cold, has every indication of a heavy snow with severer cold and the material of which this post is to be constructed, sod and sun-dried brick, cannot be procured or worked in the snow."[26] He also stated that his men were in want of "good and sufficient woolen clothing," and that he would have to send many of the horses to Fort Leavenworth for the winter because of lack of forage. His complaint about the want of clothing was referred by Adjutant General Jones to Quartermaster General M. J. Jesup. On October 27, Major M. Ree, at St. Louis, had sent to Major Roberts, at Fort Leavenworth, for the use of the Rifles, 664 wool jackets, 667 pairs of overalls, 592 fatigue frocks and 515 caps,[27] which, had they been received in time, ought to have been sufficient for Captain Ruff's 118 men. He also complained that Lieutenant Colonel Powell had "carried off with him all books, papers, orders or instructions relative to or belonging to this post," and that Assistant Surgeon Joseph Walker had been ordered to accompany the Missouri Volunteers to Fort Leavenworth, leaving the post without a medical officer. To provide for this need, Assistant Surgeon W. E. Fullwood was ordered "to proceed without delay to Platte River,"[28] He reported for duty at Fort

Childs[29] on December 9.

Work on the construction of quarters continued under Lieutenant Woodbury after the arrival of the Mounted Rifles. By early December he was able to report that "during the last month the adobe storehouse was finished. One building 20 by 50 feet and another 20 by 35 feet put up, two sod buildings 48 by 38 feet finished, and two temporary stables for 48 horses each erected. The officers and men are in tolerable quarters."[30] By Post Order No. 9, Lieutenant Woodbury was ordered to St. Louis for "procuring tools and laborers for engineer duty" necessary for the work of the next season.[31]

The new post had gone by the name "Fort Childs" but had never been so named officially. On December 30, 1848, Adjutant General R. Jones, in Section III, General Order No. 66, directed that, "The new post established at Grand Island, Platte River, will be known as Fort Kearney."[32] Thus the post on the Platte, as well as the former post on the Missouri, were named "Fort Kearney", in honor of Brigadier General Stephens Watts Kearny, who died October 31, 1848, after a life of distinguished military service.[33]

References

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4. Ibid., December 11, 1847.
5. Ibid.
6. Ibid., March 8, 1848.
7. Old Files Division, A.G.O.
8. Post Returns, Fort Kearney, April, 1848.
9. Old Files Division, A.G.O., op. cit.
10. Woodbury to Totten, June 3, 1848.
11. Old Files Division, A.G.O.
12. Woodbury to Totten, August 8, 1848.
13. Ibid.
14. Ibid., October 31, 1848.
15. Bancroft, Hubert H., History of Nevada, Colorado and Wyoming, 1840-1888, pp. 688-90.
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17. United States Statutes at Large, Vol. IX, p. 949.
18. Ibid.
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20. House Exec. Docs., 30th Cong., 2nd Sess., No. 1, Serial 537, p. 465.
21. Ibid., p. 471.

22. Woodbury to Totten, June 3, 1848.

23. Publications, Nebraska State Historical Society, Vol. XX, p. 180.

24. House Exec. Docs., 30th Cong., 2nd Sess., Vol I, No.1 Serial 537, p. 162.

25. Ruff to Jones, November 1, 1848. Woodbury to Totten, October 31, 1848.

26. Ruff to Jones, op. cit., November 1, 1848.

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30. Woodbury to Totten, December 7, 1848.

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33. Old Files Division, A.G.O.

CHAPTER V

The Forty-niners at Fort Kearney

The discovery of gold in California early in 1848 had a pronounced effect upon travel over the Oregon Trail and past Fort Kearney in 1849. News of the discovery did not reach the Atlantic seaboard until in the fall of 1848, too late for travel that year, but the spring of 1849 saw the movement well under way. Hubert Howe Bancroft estimated that some 42,000 emigrants passed over the Platte route to California in 1849. By June first 4,400 wagons, averaging four men and ten animals to a wagon had passed Fort Kearney, according to actual count made at the fort. These did not include the number passing along the north bank of the Platte, which could not be seen from the fort to be counted, although many of these emigrants in need of assistance crossed to the south bank of the river and came to the fort.

"Pawnee", wrote from Fort Kearney, May 21, "The tide of emigration towards the land of promise, via the South Pass, may now be considered as having fairly set in. Daily, hourly, the number of wagons is increasing, and the anxious races of gold diggers multiply upon us astonishingly. Today 214 wagons passed this post, making in all 1,203." Counting four persons to a wagon, he estimated that nearly 5,000 "were already on their way to fortune". He believed that 5,000 wagons, from 20,000 to 25,000 persons, and 50,000

animals would pass the fort during the season.[1]

On June Second Lieutenant Woodbury reported to Chief of Engineers Totten that "the fort was very poorly prepared to give the emigrants the assistance which very many have required, even at this post, so near the beginning of their journey."[2]

During the winter of 1848-1849 Captain Ruff's command numbering one hundred twenty-seven men had been adequate to garrison the fort. But with increasing travel over the trail, and the consequent demands made upon the military post, for protection and even for medical aid and supplies of various kinds, additional troops became necessary. Therefore, Lieutenant Colonel Benjamin L.E.Bonneville, that picturesque officer of french birth, was sent from Fort Leavenworth with Companies F, G and I, of the Sixth Infantry, and arrived at Fort Kearney on May 29. On the following day he relieved Captain Ruff of the command of the fort.[3] The five buildings and two stables, erected by Lieutenant Woodbury the preceding year, were inadequate for the larger garrison. Lieutenant Woodbury returned to the post from St. Louis May 21, and immediately commenced the erection of a hospital, which was sorely needed. He also hoped to erect, with the assistance of Lieutenant Donelson, also of the corps of Engineers, two double blocks of officers' quarters and one block of soldiers' quarters.[4] Lieutenant Donelson reported for duty

at the fort on June second and four days later Lieutenant Woodbury left for the vicinity of Laramie Creek, two hundred seventy-five miles west of Fort Kearney, there to establish the second of the military posts"along the route to Oregon."[5] Lieutenant Donelson was left in charge of the work of construction planned at Fort Kearney for the summer of 1849.

Great difficulty was encountered in carrying out the building program and only the hospital was completed that year. All of the buildings erected up to this time had been made of sod blocks or of adobe. The hospital was to be a frame building, and progress upon it was slow. Major Osborne Cross, of the Quartermaster Corps, who inspected the fort early in June, said in his report, "the hospital was the only building which was being erected." Lieutenant Woodbury was unable "to progress very rapidly for want of proper materials. Wood can be obtained on the Grand Island," but lumber principally cottonwood was scarce, and inferior for building.[6] Inadequate quarters seriously handicapped the garrison in furnishing the necessary aid to travellers over the trail.

Fort Kearney rendered many services to the emigrants. The troops forded protection against Indian attack, an ever present danger because of the hostility between the Sioux and the Pawnees in the vicinity. "Pawnee" on May 18, related that the Sioux were again attacking the Pawnees. Within twenty miles of Fort Kearney a war party of Sioux came

upon a small band of Pawnees and took three scalps and a small boy prisoner. A detachment was sent from the fort to protect the Pawnees.[7] Major Cross referred to this protection in his report above mentioned. "It is very well located to keep in check the Pawnee and Sioux nations, and is also a great protection to the emigrants who travel this route to California and Oregon."[8]

The blacksmith shop at the fort was a very crowded place. After two hundred miles of the journey weaknesses in equipment began to appear and a halt was made for repairs. Many of the emigrants were inexperienced in plains travel and all sorts of wagons were seen on the trail. Horses, mules and oxen were used to draw the wagon, and these animals had to be carefully shod to stand up on the hard, rough trail. John H. Benson, who made the trip from Louisa County, Iowa, to California in 1849 said of the equipment and animals used, "Oxen for draught purposes, were generally used. It was claimed that they possessed advantages over horses and mules. The animals had, of course, to subsist entirely upon grass and water found by the road, and oxen were said to be adapted to this kind of life. It was claimed they were easier to control, as horses and mules could not be turned loose to graze or wander at night without being hobbled. The Indians were known to be fond of horses but to care little for cattle, and this would tend to render the ox

train less liable to attack by them.

"These arguments, however, would seem to have little to do with the case, as horses and mules, in sufficient numbers, were not available and oxen were used of necessity, regardless of choice. There were, however, some horse and mule trains and some, and possibly many of the ox trains had two or more horses owned in common by the company, which were intended for scout and emergency duty and for use in rounding up the oxen should they stampede or stray away. The usual team consisted of three or four yoke of oxen and there were generally three or four men with each wagon."[9]

M. Powell, writing of his journey of 1849, in the Cincinnati Gazette mentioned the need of the blacksmith shop at the fort, "Found plenty of soldiers, and a blacksmith's shop. The latter we have occasion to wall pretty loudly for, considering the little experience each one of our party has had in that line of business. The venerable descendant of Vulcan, with his assistants, seem to be in great demand, as a large number of emigrants are waiting here to make repairs, and to give their mules time to recover from the effects of over-driving."[10] Each wagon carried some blacksmith tools and each wagon train had at least one anvil. But even so equipped, many trains were no better supplied with men who could do blacksmith work than was Powell's train.

Most of the wagon trains camped a few days in the

vicinity of the fort before going on. The necessary shoeing of draft animals and wagon repairing usually took several days and nearly every train had a number of animals which had to be rested before continuing the journey. Almost every diary describing the overland journey of 1849 speaks of "the large number of emigrants encamped about the fort."[11] Here, also, letters were written to the folks "back home" and were mailed at the fort. Many of the diaries mention the opportunity of communicating with friends and relatives left behind. One said, "We have made our noon halt, within a few rods above the fort, and we learn that we can send letters to the states, by the regular mail, postage ten cents."[12] Letters were sometimes sent back by men returning, and there was always a large number of those whose enthusiasm or supplies had given out, or who were just plain homesick, and were on their way back home. Benson, in his entry for May thirteenth, just a week after starting from St. Joseph, says that, "a few minutes ago a man came into camp, on horseback, going back home. He had been over one hundred miles out from here. He assigned no reason except he was homesick. Some of the boys told him he would go home and go to plowing corn. He said he was not particular about what he did so long as he got home."[13] Alonzo Delano writes that "during

the evening [of June 4, 1849] two young men came to our camp on mules, who had turned their faces homeward without supplies. They said that they were from Indianapolis, Indiana; that their mules had given out, and that they had determined to return, depending on the charity of the emigrants for their subsistence, which no doubt was fully and freely accorded them." Letters given them were mailed at St. Joseph.[14]

By the time the emigrants got to Fort Kearney most of them found that their wagons were too heavily laden. Indeed, many had discovered this distressing fact even before the first three hundred miles of the journey had been accomplished. When it is remembered "that the emigration of the 'forty-niners' was the largest and most heterogeneous that the plains had seen... that there were many who had failed at everything," it is not to be wondered that "many were so inexperienced that they began to discard equipment that they could not carry before they reached Fort Kearney on the Platte."[15] Benson saw many emigrants discarding supplies and equipment at Fort Kearney to lighten their wagons. A number of them were doubling teams and leaving part of their wagons. One of Benson's companions went to an encampment near the fort "and bought for $10, a fine wagon which had cost $110. He said he thought

he could have bought it for $5 but did not have the face to offer less than $10. He left his on the road for firewood or any use that might be made of it." In fact wood was so scarce that discarded wagons were often used for fuel and in his entry for May 31 Benson says, "we saw here where the wood work of several wagons had been burned and the iron left. This is the first time I have ever been where wood is worth more than iron, where a piece of wood as small as your hand would be picked up, and the whole iron of wagons left."[16]

"The great majority now crossing the plains", writes "Pawnee" on May 26, "were profoundly ignorant when starting, of what was before them -- had no idea of what an outfit consisted of." Almost every wagon which left the frontier was overloaded. Saw-mills, pick-axes, shovels, anvils, blacksmith's tools, feather-beds, rocking chairs, and a thousand other useless articles filled the wagons. They soon found that they were too heavily laden, and by the time Fort Kearney was reached, the surplus weight was discarded. The road was lined with every conceivable object which had been thrown overboard.[17]

Not only was equipment of all kinds discarded during the halt at the fort but often food supplies were thrown away. Delano was at the fort on May 23 and describes the scene, "Loading our wagons too heavily with

cumbrous and weighty articles, and with unnecessary supplies of provisions, had been a general fault, and the cattle began to exhibit signs of fatigue. We resolved, therefore, to part with everything which was not absolutely necessary, and to shorten the dimension of our wagons so that they would run easier." He further states that others had done the same and that piles of cast-off goods were in evidence everywhere. Most emigrants, unable to take the goods with them, left them in neat piles so that anyone who could use any of the articles might take them. Others, displaying traits of meanness and selfishness, poured turpentine over sugar and mixed salt and dirt with flour. This, of course, ruined the foodstuffs so that no one could use them. Mr. Delano remarks that such instances, however, were not very numerous and that most people were considerate of the needs of others and did not destroy even cast off equipment and supplies.[18] Benson, who was at the fort five days later, tells of seeing a pile of goods with a sign posted announcing one hundred pounds of flour for sale at fifty cents, one hundred pounds of bacon, fifty cents, and one hundred pounds of dried beef also fifty cents. Wagons and supplies were offered at any price they would bring. A few miles out from Fort Kearney he "saw two featherbeds that had been thrown away, and meat and beans were strewn all along the road."[19]

Despite the fact that many emigrants were forced to abandon certain supplies in an effort to lighten their loads, many of the travellers, especially those who passed over the trail a little earlier than the main rush, found themselves in dire want of food and other supplies by the time Fort Kearney was reached. Most of these had undertaken the journey without sufficient money to buy the necessary equipment, and some of the inexperienced ones had bought unwisely. On February 20, 1849, Captain Ruff wrote to Adjutant General R. Jones, "I am deeply impressed with the humanity, indeed the necessity, of permitting the commanding officers of the several posts of this route, the exercise of a sound discretion, in making issues of provisions, to such emigrant parties of our own citizens who either in returning from or going to Oregon, who frequently stand much in need of instant and substantial relief. Parties have passed during the last fall who without being so relieved and by the private charity of individuals, must have perished from want."[20]

The halt at Fort Kearney also afforded opportunity for the trains to reorganize their government. Some of the smaller parties "doubled up" with other smaller parties and this necessitated the political organization of the new larger group. Too small a train, four or

five wagons, did not offer sufficient protection in case of Indian attack, while too large a train was apt to retard progress. Page, in his diary, told of his train making an average of one hundred miles a week with fifteen wagons, and that he and his companions did not want more wagons because a larger number would slow up the train "especially at crossing streams."[21] Most of the trains consisted of men from different localities who had met on the trail. Consequently there were persons travelling together who were but slightly acquainted with one another. Some sort of organization was necessary for the proper management of the train. Usually some form of a constitution was drawn up setting forth the obligations and privileges of the members of the train. This document generally provided for the election of a captain and wagon master. The captain was first in command and had general oversight over all of the affairs of the train, while the wagon master was charged particularly with the details of the march, such as the place in the train of each wagon, and the corraling of the draught animals at night. Most of the trains organized upon leaving the Missouri River and retained this organization at least for the first part of the trip or until they admitted new wagons. Benson says that their trains, the sixth day out, "laid in camp and organized. Twenty wagons were taken in. We now have a train of thirty-seven

wagons. Matthews was elected captain, Anderson wagon-master. We adopted a constitution, which I think was a good one, and the people generally were pleased with it. The Louisa company retained its organization as a unit in the larger company."[22]

F. A. J. Gray, who crossed the plains in 1850 describes the government of their train which applies equally to trains of the preceding year. He points out that their "company was organized before starting and G. W. Read was elected captain. The agreement was that the company should be a purely democratic one. The captain was to call meetings of the company upon request and that the company was to decide by vote all questions and all the members should abide by the decision strictly."[23]

Beginning with 1849 a somewhat different, and probably more lawless, type of emigrant came upon the Oregon Trail. "Before that," writes Ghent, "were the pioneers--missionaries and home seekers--in the main a homogeneous folk, orderly and industrious, the founders of an empire. After that, beginning with the gold rush... new elements crowded the Trail. There were still, and would long continue to be, home-seekers in vast numbers; but there came also adventurers, restless wanderers, gamblers, gunmen, thieves, loose women and all the misfits of a maladjusted world."[24] This new element made

more necessary than ever the rough and ready justice of the frontier.

There was an old saying among the early trappers that there was "no law west of Leavenworth," but with the establishment of Fort Kearney, law was pushed westward. Not in the sense that the region was organized politically and a system of courts established, for this did not come until the organization of the Territory of Nebraska in 1854, but in the sense that the garrison at the fort represented the government of the United States and would assist the emigrants to maintain order and mete out justice. The moving communities were organized, opinion among the members of the train supported the maintenance of order, a thing very necessary where all sorts of people were thrown together. Diaries of the forty-niners give ample evidence of the enforcement of the will of the majority and of the adjudication of both civil and criminal cases. Jesse Applegate, in his "A Day with the Cow Column," although written of the Migration of 1843, gives a good account of the administration of justice in a civil case. So nearly did his recital of the facts describe the situation as found by Ezra Meeker in 1852 that Meeker quotes it at length in his "Oregon Trail"[35] Applegate tells of the trial

of a case, "between a proprietor and a young man who has undertaken to do a man's service on the journey for board and bed. Many such engagements exist and much interest is taken in the manner this high court, from which there is no appeal, will define the right of each party in such engagements. The council was a high court in the most exalted sense. I t was a Senate composed of the ablest and most respected fathers of the emigration. It exercised both legislative and judicial powers, and its laws and decisions proved it equal and worthy of the high trust reposed in it. Its sessions were usually held on days when the caravan was not moving. It first took the state of the little commonwealth into consideration; revised on repealed rules defective or obsolete, and enacted such others as exigencies seemed to require. The commonwealth being cared for, it next resolved itself into a court, to hear and settle private disputes and grievances. The offender and aggrieved appeared before it, witnesses were examined, and the parties were heard by themselves and sometimes by counsel. The judges thus being made fully acquainted with the case, and being in no way influenced or cramped by technicalities, decided all cases according to their merits. There was but little use for lawyers before this court, for no plea was entertained which was calculated to defeat the ends of justice.

Criminal cases were tried in much the same manner.

Meeker says, "When we stepped foot upon the right bank of the Missouri River we were outside the pale of civil law. We were within the Indian country where no organized civil government existed. Some people and some writers have assumed that each man was 'a law unto himself' and free to do his own will, dependent, of course upon his ability to enforce it. Nothing could be further from the facts than this assumption, as evil-doers soon found out to their discomfort. No general organization for law and order was affected, but the American instinct for fair play and a hearing prevailed."[27]

Often cases were heard and settled during the halt at Fort Kearney and sometimes the officers of the garrison were called upon to assist in the settlement. Delano tells of an incident which occured in May, 1849. "A day or two previous to our arrival, an emigrant was tried here [Fort Kearney] for shooting one of his comrades. He was taking his family to California, and when a few miles beyond the fort, a man offered a gross insult to his wife. In a country where there was no law--where redress could not be had by legal process--he determined to protect his own honor, and raising his rifle, shot the scoundrel down. His companions took him back to the fort (with his consent), where an investigation into the circumstances was made, and he was honorably acquitted."[28] Never afterwards, when witnesses in his defense might be hard to secure, could he

be brought to trial for that alleged crime.

Sometimes the individual took justice into his own hands. "Pawnee" saw an example of this. "A serious difficulty occured a day or two since between two emigrants in this vicinity, in which one of them by the name of Harris lost his life. It appeared that this man had been making advances toward the wife of a man by the name of Shields, which coming to his (Shields') ears, induced him to lay open his (Harris) head with an axe. He died instantly."[29]

Nearly every diary of the migration of 1849 tells of the great cholera scourge of that year. The fort could be of little assistance to the afflicted ones, however, since the person suffering from the disease usually died or recovered within one or two days. Benson reports several deaths from cholera before his party reached Fort Kearney and Cross reported cholera among the emigrants camped around the fort the latter part of May. The post records show but one case of cholera at the fort, that one being in a recruit just arrived from Fort Leavenworth. He was admitted to the hospital on June 28 and treated by Assistant Surgeon William Hammond. The patient recovered after having been administered "calomel 15 gr., opium 1 gr., applied blister to abdomen, and at 1 P.M. 30 gr. calomel."[30]

The report of Assistant Surgeon Richard H. Coolidge, from which the above quotation is taken, says that the

illness which caused the death of so many of the emigrants in 1849 and the years immediately following was not cholera, as commonly referred to, but instead a form of acute diarrhoea, probably caused by the drinking of impure water. "The character of the Platte valley here at Fort Kearney," he writes, "is that of a flat prairie, composed of sand and clay, in which, when the latter predominates, water is found standing in small pools; but when the sand is most abundant, the water passes through it like a sieve, and is quite drained away. The water is generally clear and cool, but much of the sickness among emigrants has been attributed to its use. This water is evidently derived from infilteration from the higher levels and bluffs, which in this hidden manner discharge their surplus moisture into the river."[31] The dread disease followed the emigrants until the higher altitudes of the mountains were reached, but claimed most of its victims along the Platte from Fort Kearney to Fort Laramie. Various estimates are placed upon the number of emigrants dying from it but probably no less than five thousand fell victim to it in 1849 and the early fifties.

Lieutenant Colonel Bonneville remained in command of Fort Kearney from May 30, 1849, until July 16 when he "received his appointment as Lieutenant Colonel of the Fourth Infantry July 12 with orders to repair to the Headquarters of the Army, New York, and left the post July 16 for Fort

Leavenworth." He was relieved on that day by Brevet Major Robert Hall Chilton, of the First Regiment of Dragoons.[32]

Late in the summer of 1849 hostilities again broke between the Sioux and the Pawnee Indians. It was necessary to send a detachment of troops from the fort to the Blue River, some fifty miles east of the post, to quell them. On October 23 one private was seriously and six privates slightly wounded "in a skirmish with a marauding band of Pawnee Indians." Six days later one private was killed in action "in a skirmish with the Pawnee Indians on the Platte River near Fort Kearney."[33] During the summer the Pawnees had gone on several horse stealing expeditions against the Sioux. On one of these expeditions the Sioux not only warded off the attack but took fifteen Pawnee scalps as well.

Work on the hospital building continued during the summer and the building, consisting of four rooms, was completed by fall. The officers' and soldiers' quarters, however, were not completed until the following year. Lack of quarters for the troops caused Adjutant General Jones to authorize Major Chilton "to order one of the infantry companies to Fort Leavenworth" for the winter.[34] The post returns do not show such troop movement, however, as Major Chilton kept his entire command of fourteen officers and one hundred thirty-five men at the post during the winter.[35]

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Major R. H. Chilton, the commanding officer at Fort Kearney during 1849, had a distinguished career in the army before being assigned to that command. He was made a Brevet Major on February 23, 1847, for gallant and meritorious conduct in the Battle of Buena Vista, Mexico. At the outbreak of the Civil War he resigned from the service of the United States to become a Brigadier General in the Confederate Army.

CHAPTER VI

The Fort During the Fifties

The rush of the forty-niners was but the prelude to a movement which was to continue, with but little variation, throughout the fifties. During this decade the Oregon Trail became a much travelled route and Fort Kearney developed into a fixed and established point on the great highway. California was admitted into the Union in 1850 and the lure of its mineral wealth continued to attract large numbers of gold seekers. Emigration to Oregon, largely suspended during the gold rush, was resumed over the trail in the early fifties and continued for two decades - until the railroad provided an easier way. The Sioux campaign took place in 1855. The year 1857 saw a vast movement of troops, under Brigadier-General W. S. Harney and Colonel Albert Sidney Johnston, sent to Utah by the Federal government to put down a rebellion among the Mormons, an uprising which did not actually exist. This decade also saw the establishment of the overland mail, passenger and freight carrying enterprises, which were rich in romance if not in dividends. In all of these episodes Fort Kearney was a factor.

The establishment of Fort Laramie, some 350 miles west of Fort Kearney, gave rise to difference of opinion concerning the value of Fort Kearney. On February 14, 1850, Lieutenant Woodbury wrote to Adjutant General Jones, "Ihave so often

heard the opinion expressed by officers stationed here (Fort Kearney) and others on the western frontier that Fort Kearney is an unnecessary post and ought even now to be abandoned that it seems proper that I should now state the prominent facts which appear to me to bear on the subject and make some remarks thereon."[1] He stated that the Engineer Department had not been consulted in the first place as to the necessity of a post on the Platte or in the vicinity of Fort Laramie, and that the subject could not have been understood in 1847 as well as three years later.

He further directed attention to the fact that "were the question now to arise whether a military station ought to be established at Grand Island, in addition to one near Fort Laramie, I should agree with those who think this post unnecessary, and for the following reasons:

1. The only Indians who molest travellers on this part of the route to California are, with rare exceptions, the Pawnees, who may be regarded as under the surveillance of Fort Leavenworth, for they have a village but little, if any, more than 200 miles from that post -- 120 from this -- where they spend five months of each year, in the spring planting their corn and returning to gather it in the fall. At those times they may always be found and punished for misdemeanors. In this respect they differ essentially from the Sioux and Crows who are entirely migratory.

"2. A squadron of Dragoons might always have been sent out to the Platte River in the spring with orders to protect the route and return to Fort Leavenworth in the fall.

"3. The post is too near the frontier to be necessary to emigrants as a place of rest, repairs, etc.

"4. While it must be admitted that the post adds much to the security of the route, it is equally clear that a security nearly as great might have been attained at much less cost. The expense of establishing a new post from any settlement which, under any circumstances must have been great, has been enhanced here by the absence of every building material except a very scrubby inferior cottonwood."[2]

Two other reasons for his opinion were also given, the scarcity of fuel nearby, and the impossibility of getting a farmer to settle in the neighborhood to raise corn for the public animals, corn hauled in costing a dollar a day for each animal on full rations. Despite these objections Lieutenant Woodbury thought that the question then presented was "not whether Ft. Kearney ought to have been established," but whether it should have been retained and finished. He was "not prepared to recommend its abandonment" but felt that it was incumbent on him "to state all the difficulties in the way of its completion."[3] Just how much weight this letter had with the War Department is impossible to state, but

the fort was not abandoned until more than two decades later -- when the railroad had superseded the old overland route and made military protection and the fort unnecessary.

The emigration of 1850 over the Oregon Trail was probably as great as that of 1849. Various estimates have been made ranging from thirty thousand to sixty thousand, a point midway between these figures being often given. The greater part of the travel passed Fort Kearney from the middle of May to the middle of July, after which time the number of those bound for California and Oregon diminished. It would not be possible for later emigrants safely to cross the Sierra Nevada range before danger of snow blocking the passes, and the fate of the Donner party the preceding winter did much to discourage late travel. Those on the trail after the middle of July were usually bound for Utah if going westward, if eastward, gold seekers or emigrants returning home. The greatest demands upon the fort were, therefore, most likely to be made during May, June, and July. Reinforcements were accordingly sent and joined the garrison in May, increasing the strength of Company B, First Regiment of Dragoons and Companies F,and I, Sixth Infantry, to 172 men.[4] In October the number of men was reduced to 74, two companies being sent back to Fort Leavenworth. During the same month Major Chilton was succeeded in the command of the post by Captain Henry W. Wharton, of the Sixth Infantry. Captain Wharton served in

this capacity five and one-half years, first from October 19, 1850 to June 18, 1854 and again from October 19, 1855 to April 6, 1857. His term of service was the longest of any of the forty-four commanding officers at the fort, the average being but six months.[5]

Post returns show that life at Fort Kearney during Captains Wharton's first command moved in much the same routine as during 1849 and 1850. The number of emigrants continued to be large, but since the Sioux and Pawnees were not particularly hostile during this period, only a small garrison was necessary at the fort. From 1850 to the outbreak of the Sioux War in 1855 the aggregate number of men at the fort averaged about 75.[6] A similar number was also garrisoned at Fort Laramie. Recruits were usually brought to the fort in the spring to replace those whose term of enlistment had expired or to take the place of those sent to other posts. These were usually young men who had been sent to Fort Leavenworth after enlistment and sent from there to Forts Kearney and Laramie.[7]

Most of the officers and some of the enlisted men had their families with them at the fort. To provide for the spiritual guidance of the garrison and for the education of the children at the post, a Protestant Episcopal clergyman, the Reverend James De Pui, was employed as Chaplain and Schoolmaster. He came to the post March 8, 1851, and served

there until November 8, 1858, when he was forced to take a leave of absence on account of ill health. The Chaplain and schoolmaster was appointed by the Council of Administration of the post consisting of the commanding officer and one or two other officers appointed by him, and was accorded the privileges and pay of a second lieutenant. He was carried on the post return in the officers roster.[8]

The year 1852 saw a continuation of the heavy travel of the prededing three years. Mrs. Lodisa Frizzell who was at the fort on May 26 of that year mentions in her diary that "they kept a register here, of the number of wagons which passed, there had then passed 3657, and as many wagons pass without touching here, I do not think that they can keep a correct account, and I do not think that they try to get the number of those that pass on the north side of the river, for it would be difficult to do."[9]

Since the average number of persons per wagon is generally given as four, more than 10,000 emigrants had passed along the south bank of the platte river up to the latter part of May. This year also witnessed a recurrence of the cholera, which had caused so many deaths in 1849 and 1850. One diary describes the terrible scourge which struck fear into the hearts of the bravest, and which carried off in a few hours the young and old, the weak and the strong, in these impressive words. "Cholera was raging among the

emigrants all along the road and many were dying. We drove as fast as our horses could stand it to get through this dreadful region of death, where we were seldom out of the site of graves and saw many heartrending scenes. Abandoned wagons were numerous, and their former owners were in graves nearby. . . The cholera did not extend above Fort Laramie, and as soon as we struck the mountains we felt safe from it."[10]

Most of the labor of building Fort Kearney, as was the case at other frontier posts at that time, was performed by the soldiers themselves. Usually an officer from the Corps of Engineers was in actual charge of the work. This plan was not entirely satisfactory for the men, many of whom had enlisted with high hope of adventure, objected to such prosaic tasks as moulding bricks or pushing a wheelbarrow. The Engineer officers complained that the men "soldiered" too much on the job and that mounted troops were not very good laborers because so much of their time was taken up in the care of their horses.[11] During the period of heavy migration past the fort, which included most of the decade of the fifties, the garrison was too small to perform the necessary military duties and also do all of the labor required about the post. It was, therefore, imperative that some civilian labor be employed and this was accordingly done. The post return for September, 1851, shows that there were employed at

the post; "one wheelwright at $40.00 per month, one clerk at $58.00 per month, one interpreter at $40.00 per month, two mail carriers at $50.00 per month each, and one citizen in charge of public property at Table Creek at $10.00 per month."[12] Similar entries appear upon subsequent returns.

The years 1852 and 1853 were quiet ones at the post. A garrison of about seventy- five men was on duty and about ten civilians were employed. There were a number of desertions recorded, the dull routine of the frontier post being more than some of the adventurous enlisted men could stand. The returns show some entries as , "One private in confinement, apprehended as a deserter at Fort Kearney, Oregon Route, May 23, 1853, $30.00 reward paid,"[13] and "Deserter sent to Fort Leavenworth."[14] A deserter did not have much chance, in those days, to make good his escape. There was a standing reward of $30.00 to the person who would cause a deserter to be returned to military authority, hence there was little tendency on the part of citizens to harbor deserters.

Comparative quiet had existed among the Indians along the Oregon Trail during the years immediately following the Fort Laramie council of September, 1851. As a result travellers along the trail were in little danger of being molested by the Indians. This simplified very materially the work of the military during this period. Near the end of 1853, however, war broke out between the Yanktons and the

Crows, and between the Sioux on the one hand and the Arapahos, Cheyennes and Pawnees on the other.[15] This resulted in a general unrest along the trail but it was not until the summer of 1854 that an event occurred which very greatly endangered the peace and security of the trail.

On August 17, 1854, the Brule, Ogallalla and Minneconjou divisions of the Sioux Indians were gathered at a point on the North Platte River a few miles east of Fort Laramie. They had assembled to receive their share of the $50,000.00 worth of goods which had been promised annually to the Sioux, in the Treaty of 1851, for use of the "white man's road", as the Oregon Trail was known to the Indians. In the meantime a party of Mormons headed for Salt Lake City passed along the Trail and a lame cow escaped from the train and went over into the Indian camp. There she was killed by a young Minneconjou brave and eaten by the Indians. The Mormons, next day, appealed to the commanding officer at Fort Laramie and a detachment of twenty-nine men under Brevet Second Lieutenant John L. Grattan, of Company C, Sixth Infantry, was sent to arrest the brave who killed the cow. Lieutenant Grattan, who was but twenty-one years old, and inexperienced in Indian warfare, demanded of the Indians that the cow-killer be surrendered to him. Upon their refusal Grattan ordered his men to fire into the Sioux camp, which they did, killing the Brule chief, the Bear, and one other

Indian. Before the soldiers could reload they were fired upon by the Indians and every man, including the foolish Grattan, was killed. The Sioux then raided the storehouses and took the goods intended for them and fled.[16] Peace on the plains was at an end and the garrison at Fort Kearney was soon to see its more or less irksome routine disturbed by a real Indian campaign.

Unrest among the Indian tribes had caused the War Department to issue, on July 24, 1854, Order No. 19 which directed the "commanding officers of frontier posts to afford such protection to emigrants as the strength of their commands will admit of". This order was received at Fort Kearney on September 7,[17] three weeks after the Grattan massacre. The strength of the post was not, however, increased, owing to the approach of winter. The returns show that a force of seventy-five men was maintained throughout the winter.

The following spring saw preparations made for an expedition against the Sioux Indians. Forts Kearney, Laramie and Pierre were to be used as bases for the operations. On April 3, 1855, General Philip Kearney "assumed command of the troops destined to act against the hostile Sioux."[18] Major Albemarle Cady, of the 6th Infantry, was transferred from Jefferson Barracks Missouri, and assumed command of the post on June 14. During the month various detachments, including Companies A, H, I and K of the 8th Infantry, arrived at the

post, increasing the strength of the garrison to ten officers and 363 men.[19] The following month additional troops of the Second Regiment of Dragoons and of the fourth artillery arrived to increase the strength to twenty- one officers and four hundred forty men.[20]

Since the entire expedition was mounted (eventhe Fourth Artillery was mounted and equipped as riflemen), it was necessary to postpone the punitive expedition until late summer, when the grass would be sufficient to sustain the horses. It was not until August 24 that the main expedition left Fort Kearney, although several detachments had proceeded westward earlier in the summer.

The forces against the Sioux, consisting of companies E and K of the Second Regiment of Dragoons, Company G, Fourth Artillery, Company E, Tenth Infantry, Companies A,E,H,I and K, Sixth Infantry, were under the active command of Brigadier General W. S. Harney. The expedition from Fort Kearney made good time on its westward march for it accomplished the slightly more than 150 miles in ten days, arriving at Ash Hollow, near which the Sioux were located, on the evening of September 2. The Sioux, consisting of the Brule Sioux under Chief Little Thunder and a band of Ogalala, Minneconjou and Northern Cheyenne under Chief Little Butte - estimated at seven hundred warriors all told -- were encamped on Blue Water Creek, about six miles northwest of Ash Hollow.

Upon arrival at Ash Hollow, General Harney at once made his dispositions for attacking the Indians. The cavalry, under Lieutenant Colonel St. George Cooke, "was ordered to make a detour over the tableland of Blue Water Creek to intercept the attack of the Indians from the north, while the infantry, under Major Albemarle Cady, accompanied by General Harney, moved later and proceeded up the valley to attack from below, thus placing the Indians between two forces. The cavalry moved at three o'clock on the morning of the third, proceeded up the valley, ascended the bluffs and marched along the tableland, taking a favorable position to cut off the Indians from retreat to the Sand Buttes, the reputed stronghold of the Sioux.

"The infantry moved out of camp later and proceeded up the valley of the Blue Water; but before it reached the principal village the lodges were struck, and the Indians retreated rapidly up the valley in the direction of the mounted troops. Before collision of the hostile forces a parley was held between General Harney and Chief Little Thunder, in which the General explained the government's grievance, and in closing the interview told the chief that his people had depredated upon and insulted the whites, while quietly passing through the country; that they had wantonly and in the most aggravated manner, massacred our soldiers, and now the day of retribution had come; that since Little Thunder had professed

friendship for the whites he did not wish to harm him personally, but he must either deliver up the young men, whom he acknowledged he could not control, or they must suffer the consequences of their wrong doing in battle. 'The chief, not being able to deliver up all of the butchers of our people, however willing he might have been, returned to his band to warn and prepare them for the contest which must follow.' Immediately after his departure the leading company, Captain Todd's, as skirmishers, supported by Company H, advanced and engaged the enemy in their last position on the bluffs on the right bank of the creek and drove them into the snare laid by the cavalry, which in turn charged them. They then retreated across the creek and assumed a strong position in the rugged bluffs beyond which they could not be driven without heavy loss, whereupon the troops were withdrawn and returned to camp."[21]

The Indians, according to General Harney's report to Assistant Adjutant General L. Thomas, lost eighty-six Killed, five wounded, and seventy women and children captured. The troops lost four killed, four severely wounded, three slightly wounded, and one missing.[22] The contrast in the losses sustained by the two sides is a clear indication of the terrible punishment inflicted by the army upon the Sioux for the killing of Lieutenant Grattan and his command. The incident at Ash Hollow is doubtless one which gave rise

to the statement, "When the Indians won, it was a massacre; when the white men won, it was a battle."

After punishing the Sioux the expedition did not immediately leave the vicinity of Ash Hollow. A temporary fort was established near the scene of the battle, which was named Fort Grattan. Order No. 6, announcing the new post was received at Fort Kearney on September 13,[23] The expeditionary troops remained at the new post during the winter and were not withdrawn until the termination of the expedition on the 17th of the following July. Detachments from the Sixth Infantry and the Second Regiment of Dragoons were stationed at Fort Kearney, but the returns do not show that any of the Fourth Artillery or Tenth Infantry were sent there.[24]

Unrest on the plains and the necessity for more troops at Fort Kearney made the enlargement of quarters at the post very necessary. Up to 1856 the fort had seldom been called upon to garrison more than 75 men, and was, therefore, classified as a "one company post". During the summer of 1856 thirty-one civilians at a total monthly wage of $1055 and board, appear on the post records. These men were engaged in work about the post, part of which was the erection of additional quarters.[25]

Fresh vegetables were difficult to secure at the fort. Located some three hundred miles from a farming region,

bulky foodstuffs could be transported only at great difficulty and expense. Efforts had been made to cultivate a garden at the post but the results had been such that "the farm culture" was ordered discontinued in the spring of 1854.[26] During the Indian outbreak of 1856 an order was issued "forbidding all persons from settling on the military reserves," thus making impossible the location of any farmers at the post site.[27] The January, 1857, post return carries the significant note, "The scurvy is prevailing to a considerable and increasing extent. The cause is the entire absence of vegetable food." The February return adds, "The scurvy is still prevailing and on the increase." The result was the issuing of Special Order No. 28, March 20, 1857, Department of the West, which directed the purchase of "100 bu. of potatoes for the use of the troops at Fort Kearney, Nebraska Territory."[28]

Not only were fresh vegetables difficult to furnish to the frontier posts, but everything sold there was very expensive. Both officers and men found it difficult to purchase needed articles because of the high prices. As a result of this dondition the officers and men at Fort Kearney, through their commanding officer, Captain Wharton, petitioned the "honorable Senate and House of Representatives in Congress assembled: Your petitioner respectfully submits the following petition, viz: That the benefit of the two

acts granting extra pay to the officers and soldiers serving in California, Oregon and New Mexico in consequence of the high prices of provisions, etc., may be extended to the officers and soldiers then stationed at this post for the same reason as induced this consideration for those stations at the above named places. This extra was also allowed the officers and men stationed at Fort Laramie, which is situated on the same route as this post, and articles were quite as exorbitant here as they were there, or at any of the posts for which it was given. We are 300 mi. beyond civilization, and dependent entirely upon the commissary store and the settlers for articles of subsistence, clothing, etc., and he necessarily charges 100% and on some things more than this; transportation on everything brought here is from five to six cents per pound. In this wilderness exile, removed from most of the appliances of civilized life, it therefore costs more for the actual necessaries of life than it does for luxuries at posts situated nearer civilization. All of which is respectfully submitted for the favorable consideration of Congress." The document was dated November 24, 1856 and was signed by Captain Wharton.

It received favorable consideration from the committee to which it was referred. Their indorsement stated that "the committee find the statements contained in the memorial

to be true, and believing that a discrimination ought not to have existed to the prejudice of a body of soldiers who were subjected to all the expenses and hazards of those who were stationed in California, Oregon, New Mexico and Fort Laramie, report a bill accordingly."[29]

Difficulty of transportation to the military posts west of the Missouri River caused Hon. A. J. Quitman, Chairman of the Committee on Military Affairs of the House of Representatives, to write to Secretary Jefferson Davis, of the War Department, for information concerning the need for appropriations for the construction of certain roads to the western military posts. Secretary Davis replied by transmitting an extract from the report of Captain John J. Dickerson, in charge of the construction of the road from Council Bluffs to New Fort Kearney. He quoted the Captain as saying that "the appropriation, when expended, will make a good wagon road for the greater part of the year. To render it passable at all seasons an additional appropriation of about $25,000 will be necessary. The line of the road crosses many small sloughs and low places, which are at all times overflowed, and which become miry after heavy rains. A little corduroy at the sloughs and embankment across at the low places, for which I submit an estimate, would make them passable at all times....The more perfect construction of the road in the manner estimated

for will afford additional facilities for the movement of troops and supplies to the military post established in that region, and will contribute to the better protection of emigration to the slope of the Pacific and to the advance settlements which are extending along the line of the Platte."[30]

This road from Council Bluffs, constructed by the War Department, connected at Fort Kearney with the "Pacific Wagon Road" which was constructed under the direction of the Secretary of the Interior, Mr. Jacob Thompson. In a report to Speaker James L. Orr, of the House of Representatives, Secretary Thompson says of the Pacific Road, "This road being about 1400 miles in length, for the sake of economy and convenience of construction was divided into three divisions, viz: the first extending from Fort Kearney to Independence Rock; the second from Independence Rock to City Rocks; and the third from City Rocks to the eastern boundary of California, near Honey Lake valley."[31] The entire road was, therefore, some 1600 miles long, and connected California with the Missouri River.

Utah had been created a territory in 1850 and Brigham Young had been appointed governor by President Millard Fillmore. Under Governor Young's able leadership the territory increased in number and prospered. From time to time various unfavorable reports came to the ears of official

Washington concerning conditions in Utah. "All western states, and especially western territories, were often plagued with scapegoat political appointees who were thrust out of the eastern boiling political pot, either to get them out of the way or to give them a soft job with good pay. These political appointees were quite generally denounced by all the western peoples. Especially did poor Utah, with her religious complex and her northern sympathies, come in for abuse by officials and renegade appointees."[32]

These untrue and often malicious reports, for the most part, emanated from these "renegade appointees." In 1854, President Franklin Pierce decided to replace Governor Brigham Young, whose term was about to expire. To succeed him he appointed Lieutenant-Colonel E.J. Steptoe, who was stationed in Utah on military duty. Colonel Steptoe investigated conditions in Utah and reported to the President that the charges preferred by these officials were without foundation. He refused to act as governor and on December 30, 1854, recommended the reappointment of Mr. Young "as Governor and Superintendent of Indian affairs" for Utah. President Pierce accordingly re-appointed Brigham Young as Governor of the Territory sometime in January, 1855."[33]

During the years 1855 and 1856 political affairs ran smoothly in Utah. In 1857 "while the saints were busy developing their valley homes, doing their best

to subdue the Indians around them, and opening the new Territory to genuine settlement, they were startled to learn that President James Buchanan at Washington had decided on a change of Governorship, and also on the appointment of fresh judges to the new territory. Furthermore, and army was to accompany the new appointees in order to sustain their authority and supress the 'rebellion among the Mormon people.'

"The officials at Washington had taken this drastic and unfortunate decision as a result of unfounded accusations against the Mormons--accusations which no government should have accepted without first making an investigation, which could easily have been done....Without a word of warning to the people of the Territory a force of 2,500 soldiers was ordered to Utah under the command of Brigadier-General W. S. Harney and Colonel Albert Sidney Johnston. In their company was Mr. Alfred Cumming of Georgia, who was to be installed as the new Governor of Utah. Also there ware other Federal Appointees of the Territory. On the way out the Soldiers declared that the Mormons were in rebellion against the Government and that they were going to Utah on an order of extermination."[34]

So large a movement of troops across the plains caused scenes of bustling activity at Fort Kearney. Orders,dated June 30, were received from Army Headquarters

July 12, directing "movements of troops for Utah Territory. Brevet Brigadier General Harney to command the whole force." No men from the garrison at Fort Kearney were ordered to the expedition, since but seventy-five men were stationed at the post during the summer of 1857.[35] The expedition was assembled and equipped at Fort Leavenworth. It set out from there late in July, as soon as the grass on the plains was sufficient for forage.

Parts of the expedition began to arrive at Fort Kearney early in August. The post return for that month lists the movement of eight companies of the Tenth U.S. Infantry, and one battery of the Fourth Artillery, en route, to Utah. They camped in the vicinity of the post from the seventh to the eleventh. The Fifth Regiment of Infantry was at the fort from the tenth to the fifteenth and a detachment of recruits for the Second Regiment of Dragoons was there from the thirteenth to the seventeenth. These organizations were on their way to Utah. A number of other detachments also stopped at the fort for a few days during the month. Among these were Companies A. C. and H, of the Sixth U.S. Infantry, and detachments from the Fourth Artillery and the First Cavalry.

As soon as the troop movement began the Mormon agents at the Emigration Bureau at Winter Quarters, on the Missouri, heard about it. They at once dispatched three

scouts to warn Governor Young. Upon arrival at Salt Lake City, the scouts found the place almost deserted. The people had gone to a nearby valley in the Wasatch Mountains to celebrate two important July holidays, the nation's birthday, July 4, and Utah's birthday, July 24. Upon receiving the news brought by the three weary scouts, Governor Young called the people together and told them the news. He urged them to continue their festivities and then to return to their homes. Martial law was declared and the Mormon troops, under Lieutenant General D. H. Wells, occupied all the mountain passes. They sent a detachment to Fort Bridger and burned it and its supplies. "They had been counselled by Brigham Young to shed no blood and to provoke no quarrels, but to keep the army out of the valley through the coming winter. They destroyed some Government trains. They set fire to the grass, and harried the troops on the right hand and on the left. Not a shot was fired, not a drop of blood was shed." No troops entered the valley that winter.[37]

Captain Stewart Van Vliet, who stopped at Fort Kearney from August 8th to 10th, was an Assistant Quartermaster and in command of the Commissary Department of the expedition. He was sent ahead of the main force to survey conditions with regard to food and forage. Arriving at Salt Lake City in September, 1857, he was cordially received by Governor

Young and the officials of the Church. They told him in courteous but forceful terms that the army would not be permitted to enter the city, and that the saints would do their utmost to repell any force sent against them.[38]

Throughout September Fort Kearney was the temporary stopping place of no less than eight detachments bound for Utah. On the 24 th Colonel Albert Sidney Johnston; "commanding the army for Utah, with escort of the 2nd Dragoons arrived... and left on the 25th inst. in route for Salt Lake City." The troop movement continued throughout October, during which time seven companies of the Second Regiment of Dragoons were temporarily at the post while en route to Utah.[39]

The winter of 1857-58 saw the Army of the Unites States unable to move on to its objective, being forced to erect such rude shelters as it could near the site of the burned Fort Bridger, and there spend a miserable winter. Early in the spring, Brigham Young, realized that prolonged resistance was useless, so permitted the troops to advance to Salt Lake without further molestation. The newly appointed Governor, Alfred Cumming, took charge of the situation, and the military campaign came to an end. The United States authorities did not attempt to punish any of the Mormons, but henceforward Utah came under the direct control of the

United States.[40]

After the season for troop movement had passed, Fort Kearney settled down to a winter of comparative quiet. First Lieutenant Elisha J. Marshall, of the Sixth Infantry, remained in command until spring. Company I, 6th Infantry, numbering 62 men, comprised the garrison until March, 1858. On February 16, Company H, 4th Artillery, left Fort Leavenworth for Fort Kearney, and on the 21st and 27th encountered severe snowstorms. The thermometer ranged from 45° to -6°, but the company arrived on March 5th without any injurious effects to the command from the cold." On the following day Captain John P. McCown, of the 4th Artillery, took command of the post.

On March 10, an order was received at the fort to the effect that "the Turkish Vice Admiral was to be received with military honors." Although the returns give no detailed account the order must have caused considerable preparation to be made for so distinguished a visitor. Grounds would be policed with meticulous care, quarters vigorously scrubbed, accoutermants carefully gone over, and every man brought up to his most soldierly appearance. The Vice Admiral ranked with a Lieutenant General, any post would be honored by his presence. The guard would be turned out and all of the troops of the garrison would pass in review. No record appears, however, of his having visited the fort.[41]

Tropp movements continued during the summer of 1858 and the garrison at the post saw detachments from the 6th Infantry and from the Second Regiment of Dragoons pass on their way to Utah. The following year was active at the fort because of the withdrawal of the troops from Utah and the return of many of the companies east. The returns show numerous entries of detachments which "arrived at this post from Utah." The garrison was increased from sixty-five men to more than three hundred. Approximately this number was retained at the fort until withdrawal to take part in the Civil War.

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CHAPTER VII

Fort Kearney and the Pony Express

Communication on the plains was slow during the fifties. Post reports or returns were made up by the commanding officer at the end of each month and one copy was forwarded at once to the Adjutant General's Office. The records show that it took these returns more than a month to reach Washington. The returns for December, 1850, was received at the Adjutant General's office the following February 10. The return for September, 1851, arrived on November 12, while the return for October, 1856, was not received until December 9. The return for April, 1858, was delivered at Washington May 24 and made the best time of any of the returns of the decade.[1]

Orders from Washington were likewise slow in reaching the western military posts. General Order No.3, "Directing the farm culture to be discontinued," was dated February 9, 1854, and was received from the Adjutant General March 9. Order No. 4, of April 30, 1856, "Forbidding all persons from settling on the military reserves," was delivered at the fort on the following June 10. The extension of the telegraph westward speeded up the transmission of dispatches somewhat, for a "telegraphic copy" of a letter from the Adjutant General under date of July 15, 1857, was received on

August 12. The telegraph line did not reach Fort Kearney until in November, 1860, but each westward extension of the new means of communication shortened the time required for important orders to reach the fort. Mail carriers for several years formed a part of the personnel at Fort Kearney. The return for September, 1851, listed two civilians so employed at $ 50. per month each. The return for December 1857, likewise included two carriers, one at $ 74. per month and the other at $ 60.[2]

No provision was made by the Federal Government for postal facilities to the plains until 1850. Prior to that time all mail to and from Fort Kearney was carried by army couriers. During that year, however, the United States Postoffice Department entered into a contract with Colonel Samuel H. Woodson of Independence, Missouri, for the transportation of mail from that place to Salt Lake City. The service was to be monthly each way and the Oregon Trail was to be followed. Difficulty was experienced in maintaining the monthly schedule during the winter, but during other seasons of the year was maintained regularly. This gave the fort a monthly postal service in addition to that rendered by its own couriers.

Monthly service ouer this route past Fort Kearney continued until 1858, when the Woodson contract expired. The new contract, entered into with John M. Hockaday,

provided for a weekly service between Independence and Salt Lake City over the same route. This gave Fort Kearney a weekly service and greatly facilitated communication between the post and its departmental headquarters. After the inauguration of this weekly mail service the post returns do not list mail carriers as being employed regularly. Couriers were used only in case of emergency and were selected from the troops themselves.

Despite the great improvement in service, many civilians were not satisfied with the facilities offered and thought that a daily service should be provided. Chief among these was Senator William M. Gwin of California. In the fall of 1854 he had ridden to Washington over the central route by way of Salt Lake City, the South Pass and Fort Kearney. On a part of the trip he was accompanied by Mr. B. F. Ficklin, general superintendent of the firm of Russell, Majors and Waddell. Out of this trip grew the idea of the pony express.[3]

Under the plan developed by Senator Gwin and William H. Russell, president of the firm of Russell, Majors and Waddell, the service was to be a weekly one between St. Joseph, Missouri and San Francisco, California. The mail was to be carried on horse back, the riders going day and night, and the time between the two points was to be nine days. Senator Gwin was prompted by two motives in his advocacy of such an enterprise. First, it would greatly facilitate communication

between the east and his own state; and, second, it would make possible more rapid transmission of orders and letters to the western military posts.

Plans for the organization of the faster service were rapidly developed during the winter of 1859-1860. No government subsidy was provided, although Mr. Russell hoped that such would be available after the express was under way. The necessary stations enroute were equipped, horses procured, and riders employed. One of division stations was established at Fort Kearney, where the firm already had a station for its stage and freight service. The service was inaugurated on April 3, 1860, when riders started simultaneously from St. Joseph and San Francisco.

The enterprise was a strictly private one and was, therefore, regarded askance by the postal authorities. On April 10, one week after the service had begun, Senator Gwin spoke in the Senate on behalf of a petition from the Legislature of California "in favor of the establishment of a daily mail between some point on the Mississippi River and some point in California. The Senate had, a short time previously, inquired into the expediency of establishing a semi-weekly mail between St. Joseph and Placerville. The Committee on Military Affairs had favored the proposal, because it would afford better communication with the western military posts.[4]

Communication between the Headquarters of the Department of the west, St. Louis, and the western posts was greatly speeded up by the faster facilities of the Pony Express. Visscher says that "the Pony Express, as a means of communication between the two remote coasts, was largely employed by the Government. . ."[5] The post returns from Fort Kearney amply bear witness to the truth of this statement. More than three weeks was required in 1858 for a letter from the St. Louis Headquarters to reach Fort Kearney. The returns for 1859 and 1860, up to the time of the beginning of the Pony Express, show three weeks to be about the average time for orders to get out from St. Louis. The return of June, 1860, has this significant entry, "Letter, June 26, Headquarters, Department of the west, Received, July 1." The July return records the fact that a letter dated St. Louis, July 3, was received July 13, and one of July 25 was received July 31.

From St. Joseph to Fort Kearney, a distance of nearly 300 miles, the Pony Express riders had comparatively easy going. The trail was not difficult to follow and there was little danger of Indian attack. "From Fort Kearney on," however, "the rider had to keep a 'stirrup eye' out for Indians. At first the riders were armed with carbines, as well as two revolvers per man. The carbines were soon discarded, as were the extra revolvers. The usual armament was one 'navy' revolver. Occasionally a rider carried an extra, loaded

cylinder for his revolver in case of a fight with several opponents at close quarters. Even this extra weight was begrudged."[6] The garrison at the fort did everything it could to afford protection for the mail. In August Captain Samuel D. Sturgis was sent out "on a scout" into the Indian Country,[7] and on September 11 Captain Alfred Sully, commanding Company F, Second Infantry, was sent among the Pawnees to reconnoiter.[8]

When the Pony Express was begun on April 3, 1860, the newly formed Western Union Telegraph Company had extended its wires westward as far as St. Joseph, Missouri, and this had been the determining factor in the selection of that place as the starting point for the Express. A week before Senator Gwin had spoken in the Senate in behalf of Senate No. 84, "to facilitate communication between the Atlantic and Pacific States by electric telegraph". This bill provided for a $50,000 annual subsidy to the Sibley interests for use by the government of a telegraph line to be built from some point west of the Mississippi River, connecting with the eastern lines, to San Francisco. The government was to have a priority of use of the line or lines built and the Secretary of War was to have the privilege of connecting them by telegraph with any military posts of the United States.[9]

By November, 1860, the Missouri and Western Telegraph Company, a subsidiary of the Western Union Telegraph Company, had completed its line from Brownville, Nebraska, on the

Missouri River, by way of Omaha, to Fort Kearney. "There being no room about the military quarters at Fort Kearney suitable for the telegraph office when the line reached there, the table, instruments, battery and other paraphernalia belonging to the company were placed in the sod building erected in the later 50's by Mr. Moses Sydenham, the first postmaster at Fort Kearney, who was at that time proprietor of a small book, stationery and news depot in connection with the post office. Small as it was it did a splendid business for a frontier enterprise in pioneer days. Being a thoroughly wide-awake and progressive man, Mr Sydenham generously consented to allow the operator to come into his building and occupy a corner".[10] The first operator at Fort Kearney was Dick Ellsworth.[11]

As the western terminus of the telegraph line, Fort Kearney assumed new importance as a Pony Express station. Here dispatches from the east were taken on west by the riders. "My first contact with the telegraph company", writes William Campbell, a former Pony Express rider, "was at Fort Kearney, at the western end of the telegraph line, where I stopped to pick up telegrams that traveled the rest of the way west by Pony Express. I shall always remember the kindness of Mr. Ellsworth, operator of the Western Union office at Fort Kearney. He was always ready to do a favor for the riders and usually had coffee on hand. It was just prior to the

Civil War and Mr. Ellsworth furnished us with news of the impending struggle. I would sit and eat cookies, and hear the news, until the last minute, then go and maintain my schedule."[12]

Mr. Campbell also tells of the hard ride he had from Fort Kearney with President Lincoln's first message to Congress. "The Pony Express was put to the test carrying this message; we got it through from St. Joseph to San Francisco in seven days and eighteen hours. We made another fast run with the news "that Fort Sumter had been fired upon."

One night, while on his relay a short distance west of Fort Kearney, Mr. Campbell was pursued by a pack of wolves. Once he spent twenty-four hours in the saddle carrying the mail one hundred twenty miles to Fairfield with snow on the ground two or three feet deep and the mercury around zero. He told where the trail lay by watching the tall weeds on either side and often had to get off and lead his horse. When he got to Fort Kearney there was no rider to go on with the mail, so he went on to Fairfield twenty miles away. It was a common occurrance for a rider to go beyond his own relay when another rider was unable to carry on.

Fort Kearney remained the western terminus of the telegraph line until the summer of 1861. In the fall of the preceding year the Western Union Telegraph Company had selected Edward Creighton, a well known eastern contractor and line builder, to make a survey of the route west of Fort Kearney.

Facing the rigors of winter, he set out from Fort Kearney by stage coach to make the survey. He went up the Platte River to Fort Laramie, through the South Pass and down to Salt Lake City. Here he conferred with Brigham Young, who promised him his heartiest support.

Desiring also to confer with the officials of the California State Telegraph Company at San Francisco, Mr. Creighton left Salt Lake City by saddle and mule in the dead of winter. To one used to such travel the journey would have been strenuous enough, but to an easterner unaccustomed to riding a mule, it was doubly so. Nevertheless he made the arduous trip successfully and conferred with the men he had wished to see. Returning to Omaha, in the spring, he made his report to the company April 12, 1861, and expressed his willingness to undertake the construction of the line to Salt Lake City. This offer settled the question of route and Mr. Creighton's proposal was accepted. The line was to be built from Fort Kearney to Salt Lake City by way of Fort Laramie and the South Pass.

Steps necessary for the organization of the work were immediately taken by Mr. Creighton. Transportation of supplies and material alone required more than one thousand oxen, two hundred mules and four hundred wagons. The question of poles was a serious one, for much of the route lay through a region absolutely devoid of timber. Fortunately

a supply of red cedar was found near the junction of the North and South Platte rivers, and these trees furnished the cedar used for poles. Many of the poles had to be hauled more than one hundred miles to Fort Kearney, where the work was to begin.

Specifications for the construction of the line were carefully drawn up. There were to be not less than twenty-five poles to the mile, number nine iron wire of the best quality, three hundred fifty pounds to the mile, was to be used. The line was to be insulated, in the best manner then known, by the use of "nigger head" insulators (glass insulators with wooden caps). Repeaters of the most approved type were to be used so that messages could be sent at least as far as Salt Lake City without having to be relayed.[13]

Work was begun in July at Fort Kearney. Mr. Creighton, had four hundred men, all heavily armed and with necessary provisions, including one hundred head of cattle for beef. Five hundred head of oxen and mules and more than one hundred wagons were used for the transportation of materials and provisions. The line was built at a rate of from five to six miles a day, the wire being strung on the poles as soon as they were set. The pioneer work done by the stage company and the Pony Express in establishing stations along the route followed by the telegraph was very helpful to the construction crews, in that aid could be secured every ten

miles if needed to withstand an Indian attack, or in some other emergency.

Very little trouble with the Indians was experienced in the building of the line west from Fort Kearney. Mr. Creighton and the construction crews did everything they could to cause the line to be regarded with awe by the red men. "With the idea of impressing the Indians with the mysterious power of the wire express, Creighton, then at Fort Bridger, asked Washakie, chief of the Shoshones, if he would like to talk with a Sioux Chieftain at Horseshoe station, a few miles west of Fort Laramie. The Shoshone chieftain asked a question, which the Sioux answered. Then followed several questions and answers, back and forth, between the two chieftains. Greatly mystified, but hardly convinced that some trick had not been played upon them, the chiefs agreed to meet at a place midway between the stations and compare notes. This was done, with the result that the Indian tribes soon learned, through their chieftains, that the wire was really the instrument of Manitou."[14]

A similar incident a few years later is told by General Grenville M. Dodge. While making surveys for the Pacific railroad, he told of the attitude of the Indians toward the telegraph line. "When the overland telegraph was built they were taught to respect it and not destroy it. This was done after the line was opened to Fort Laramie by stationing

several of their most intelligent chiefs at Fort Laramie and others at Fort Kearney, the two posts being 300 miles apart, and having them talk to each other over the wire and note the time sent and received. Then we had them mount their fleetest horses and ride as fast as they could until they met at old Jule's ranch, at the mouth of the Lodge Pole, this being about half way between Kearney and Laramie. Of course this was astonishing and mysterious to the Indians. Thereafter you could often see Indians with their heads against the telegraph poles, listening to the peculiar sound the wind makes as it runs along the wires through the insulators. They thought, and said, it was 'Big Medicine' talking. I never could convince them that I could go to the telegraph poles the same as they did and tell them what was said, or send a message for them to some chief far away, as they had often seen me use my traveling instruments, cut into the line, and send and receive messages."[15]

Frank A. Root, who was a stage driver along the telegraph line during the sixties, relates that the Indians seldom molested the line. He said that occasionally desperadoes would cut the line so that they might better escape after the commission of a crime, and that the mischief was often charged to the Indians, but that they were nearly always not the guilty ones. "The single wire reaching from pole to pole which passed through their hunting grounds they

considered as something sacred, having been taught that it extended east directly to the White House, and was private property, built by, and belonging exclusively to, the 'Great Father,' at Washington."[16]

Two years had been the generally accepted time thought necessary for the completion of the line. Due, however, to the extraordinary zeal with which the work was pursued, the forks of the Platte were reached early in August and by September the line from Fort Kearney to Fort Laramie was completed. The crews working eastward from Salt Lake City, also under direction of Mr. Creighton, had made equally good progress, and by October 18, the Creighton contract from Fort Kearney to Salt Lake City, was fully completed. In the meantime work on the line westward from Salt Lake City had progressed rapidly and was finished on October 18. A few days were required to make the necessary connections in Salt Lake City and on October 24, 1861, the line from New York to San Francisco, a distance of 3,595 miles was un fait accompli.

The line was immediately a financial success, "Its business was large, its outlook brilliant, its position impregnable, its influence immense. It stood confessedly one of the vastest and most comprehensive of the private enterprises of the world."[17]

From November, 1860, until August, 1861, Fort Kearney

was the western terminus of the telegraph line. After the transcontinental line was completed"on account of the steadily increasing commerce of the plains in the early sixties, and the fact that there were several companies of troops stationed at Fort Kearney, made this the most important office on the eastern division of the great stage line. At this point the telegraph line crossed from the north to the south bank of the Platte, and here was the intersection of the great overland mail route from Atchison, and it also was the western terminus of the Western Stage Company's route, which operated lines to Fort Kearney from Omaha and Nebraska City. There was no telegraph line on the overland stage route along the Little Blue River between Atchison and this prominent military post, and all dispatches from Atchison sent to Fort Kearney and beyond were transmitted up the Missouri River via Omaha."[18]

The telegraph office was maintained at Fort Kearney until the Union Pacific Railroad was built, at which time the telegraph line was moved to parallel the railroad.

With the completion of the telegraph across the continent need for the Pony Express no longer existed. On October 26, after heavy financial loss to the firm operating it, the service came officially to a close. In the words of William Campbell, "the telegraph does in a second what it took eighty young men and hundreds of horses to do when I

was a rider in the Pony Express."[19] Truly the telegraph key had supplanted the pony.

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CHAPTER VIII

The Civil War

Gathering clouds of civil war had been banking upon the national horizon for more than a decade. In 1861 the storm broke, plunging the United States into internecine strife. The effect upon Fort Kearney and the western posts was immediate. Troops and ordnance were withdrawn for use in putting down the rebellion and the entire military establishment was placed upon a war footing.

During the winter of 1860-1861 Fort Kearney had been under the command of Colonel Dixon S. Miles, of the Second Infantry. The garrison consisted of Company A, the Second Regiment of Dragoons; Companies E and F of the Second Infantry; and the Headquarters and Regimental Band of the Second Infantry. There were fourteen officers and two hundred fifty-three men carried on the muster roll. Four civilians were employed; one blacksmith, one carpenter, one clerk and one interpreter.[1] This was a smaller force than had been maintained during the summer of 1860, but the Indian danger having somewhat abated, a part of the troops had been withdrawn.

On April 15, 1861, Colonel Miles and the scattered companies (only Headquarters, E and F, being at Fort Kearney)

of the Second Infantry were ordered east on account of the outbreak of war.[2] Captain Charles H. Tyler of Company F, the Second Regiment of Dragoons, assumed command of the post. The troop withdrawals in April amounted to twelve officers and one hundred sixty-two men.[3]

War brought exciting times to Fort Kearney. A large number of officers stationed there and of the residents about the fort were southern sympathizers and many a lively argument resulted. All gathered around the telegraph station in Mr. Sydenham's store and eagerly to await news of the struggle. Captain Tyler, the commandant, was an ardent southern man. He is said to have spiked the fifteen brass cannon of the fort, making them useless for service.[4] He was relieved of the command of the fort May 13,1861, and was dismissed from the army a few weeks later. He was a native of Virginia and later served as a Colonel in the Confederate army.[5]

On May 13 First Lieutenant Brockholst Livingston, of the Second Regiment of Dragoons, assumed command of the post. He was a native of New York and remained loyal to the Union. The May post return notes that one captain and two first lieutenants had been dismissed from the army because of Southern sympathy. It also lists the receipt, on May 28th, of General Order No. 13, Adjutant General's

office, directing "that all officers of the army, take and subscribe a new oath of allegiance to the United States of America."[6]

Lieutenant Livingston was relieved of the command of the fort on June 24th and Captain E.W.B. Newby, of the First Cavalry, succeeded him. Seven additional officers and forty-eight more men were added to the garrison in June, making a total of twelve officers and two hundred ten men at the post. Of the twelve officers four were newly promoted and three were newly appointed from the ranks. The war created an urgent demand for additional officers and these promotions and appointments were but indications of the steps taken by the military authorities to supply the needed officer personnel. The number of horses at the fort was increased to one hundred ninety-one mounts and fourteen pieces of field artillery and three other pieces made up the artillery ordnance. On June 27th Special Order No. 78, Headquarters, Department of the West, was received directing that "ordnance at Fort Kearney be sent to Fort Leavenworth." Evidently it was thought that spiritual guidance was not necessary at the fort in wartime, for the "chaplain was discharged at the expiration of his term."[7]

The strength of the garrison remained at approximately two hundred during the summer of 1861. The returns for

July, August and September mention a number of orders referring to the "dismissal of sundry officers." Southern officers were constantly resigning or being dismissed from the service. Many of these men had served with distinction in the Army of the United States and later rendered faithful and gallant service to the Confederacy.

On November 2th Company A of the Second Cavalry left the post for Washington. The order was received on the fourth and the company marched out on the eighth. Probably no better illustration could be given of the war-time efficiency of this frontier post than the dispatch with which this order was carried out. To get an entire cavalry company ready, do last minute blacksmithing, load the supply train, and get all equipment ready to move from a frontier post, over roads none too good at best--in three days--shows a high state of efficiency on the part of both officers and men.

On December 21th the garrison was reinforced by the arrival of Company F and H of the Fourth Cavalry. On the same day Captain John A. Thompson, Company F, Fourth Cavalry, relieved Captain Newby of the command of the fort. No further reinforcements were sent to the post until March 13th, when Companies A, D, F, and G, of the Eighth Kansas Volunteers, joined from Fort Leavenworth. This was the first detachments of volunteer troops sent

to Fort Kearney to replace regular army regiments withdrawn during the war. The garrison of the post was increased to fifteen officers and two hundred forty-six men, by reason of this transfer of troops from Fort Leavenworth.

Two orders were received at the fort on February 18th. The first, from Army Headquarters and dated January 31st, directed "Commanding officers to permit telegraph offices etc. at their posts." This did not effect the situation at Fort Kearney, for Colonel Miles had welcomed the coming of the telegraph. The size of the garrison, two hundred sixty-six men, taxed to the utmost the buildings of the post, causing no space to be available in the military quarters for the telegraph office. The office was, therefore, located in Mr Sydenham's bookstore. The second order from Headquarters, Department of the West, dated February 11th, required "Return of troops to be sent each Saturday." This was in addition to the monthly returns required on the last day of each month. This was but a temporary arrangement and lasted only the duration of the war.[9] These weekly returns, which are on file with the Civil War Records of the Adjutant General's office in the Munitions Building at Washington, are not so complete as the monthly returns, but sometimes record details omitted from the more complete monthly returns.

During the Civil War strife in Kansas affected the posts near that state. Fort Leavenworth, located in the northeastern part of Kansas, was most seriously affected. Here the military commanders of the Union forces "were at their wits' end to keep the civilian population from destroying itself". Kansas was still sore from its own civil war of the preceding decade, and "the result was guerrilla warfare and private violence. It is not possible to separate the events that may have had some military meaning from those that were only acts of revenge or private grudge. There were raids on both sides, and murder, theft and arson. Bands of ruffians held together for considerable periods with no other purpose than that of plunder...The term 'border ruffians' had been used in the days of the Kansas war to describe the gangs of southern sympathizers who revaged the Kansas settlements; it continued to be used throughout the Civil War."[10]

Fort Kearney was also influenced. It was located but forty miles from the Kansas line and might be called upon at any time to send troops to suppress such border ruffians as might appear in northern Kansas or southern Nebraska. Captain Thompson received, on April 13th, General Order No. 3 "Ordering military officers to arrest all bands of marauders within the District."[11]

During the summer of 1862 a force of twenty-three officers

and two hundred twenty-nine men was stationed at the fort. On June 21st Companies F.and H of the Fourth Cavalry, Captain Thompson commanding, were relieved from duty by Company D and K of the Tenth Infantry and Colonel E.B. Alexander of that organization assumed command of the post. On June 24th Companies A, D, and G, Eighth Kansas Volunteers were replaced by troops from the Sixth Ohio Cavalry, Ninth Wiscohsin Battery and the Ninth Kansas Volunteers.[12] This was in line with the policy of replacing regular army organization at the western posts by volunteer outfits.

It was not until Jan. 2, 1863, that any Nebraska volunteers were stationed at Fort Kearney. On that date Companies B and C, Second Nebraska Cavalry, joined the command. On April 30th Lieutenant Colonel William F. Sapp, of the Second Nebraska Cavalry, relieved Colonel Alexander of the command of the post and on July 26th Company D of this organization "consisting of two officers and sixty-two enlisted men present" was added to the garrison.[13]

Enlisted men continued to be promoted to the commissioned personnel in the colunteer regiments as had been the practice in the regular army units. The April 1863 return lists one Second Lieutenant as "commissioned lately, promoted from sergeant." The June return mentions General Order No. 53, under date of June 18, which provided for the "discharge of enlisted men to enable them to accept promotion."

Since promotion to the highest non-commissioned rank, that of Regimental Sergeant Major, did not require discharge from the army, the order referred to enlisted men about to be commissioned, although the order did not directly mention the rank or ranks involved.

Many of the volunteers stationed at Fort Kearney had enlisted with the idea of service at the battle fronts and were disappointed at being assigned to duty on the plains and away from the active theater of war. Consequently desertions among these troops were numerous. "One private confined as deserter,"[14] and "three privates charged with desertion escaped from the guard house,"[15] are items of these disappointed and often-time homesick men.

On the whole, however, these volunteer regiments rendered excellent service. One writer says of them, "among others, the Nebraska troops were stationed at Fort Kearney during the war, and they, from their knowledge of the enemy and the country, did more good in proportion to their numbers, than did troops from the more eastern states."[16]

The Territory of Nebraska, with a population of less than 30,000, furnished 3,307 officers and men to the Union forces during the war. This exceptionally large percentage was more than twelve percent of the population. These men were organized in the First Regiment, Nebraska Cavalry, consisting of 1,370 men; the Second Regiment, Nebraska

Cavalry, 1,384 men; the Curtis Horse, three hundred forty one men; the Pawnee Scouts, one hundred twenty men; and the Omaha Scouts, ninety-two men. The First Regiment was organized in June, 1861 as an infantry regiment and saw active service during the first engagements of the war. It was changed by order of the War Department, November 1863, to the cavalry branch of the army. As such it saw active service until January, 1864, when the veterans of the regiment were granted furloughs until August 13, and sent to Omaha. On August 18 these veterans were ordered to Fort Kearney and arrived there on the twenty-third.[17]

Many of the men stationed at Fort Kearney, though members of volunteer regiments bearing the names of other states, were from Nebraska. "Although there is in the union army but one regiment of infantry and a few companies of cavalry that bear the name of Nebraska, yet she deserves credit for contributing as large a number of soldiers in proportion to her inhabitants as any state or territory in the union. There is scarcely a regiment from either Kansas, Missouri, Iowa, or Illinois, without more or less from Nebraska. With many hostile tribes of Indians residing in Nebraska, the Pawnees and Sioux being continually on the warpath, danger of attack was ever present. The people of the territory protested against their men being sent away, for they felt that they were needed to keep the Indians in check. It was this

insistent demand on the part of the people which was largely responsible for the assignment of the First Cavalry to Fort Kearney. Governor Alvin Saunders issued a proclamation on August 18, 1862, forbidding Nebraskans to enlist in the military organizations of neighboring states. The Territory's regiment in the field and home protection would require every volunteer which the territory could furnish.[18]

Three companies, B,C and D, of the Second Nebraska Cavalry, consisting of nine officers and two hundred eighty men, and under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Sapp, comprised the garrison at the fort during the summer of 1863. The returns do not show particularly great activity at the post during this time. The Indians of the region were comparatively quiet, although persons who had been very much among them detected a feeling of unrest. On June 24 a detachment from Company B, Second Nebraska Cavalry, consisting of one officer and fifty men, went on an expedition to the Pawnee Reserve and along the Republican River. They were gone exactly a month, returning to the fort on July 24. They did not report having seen any hostile Indians.[19]

An Omaha newspaper, The Nebraskian, reported in its July 17, 1863 issue "that Colonel Sapp, just from the Pawnee agency, predicts that there will be a fight on the Republican River between the Sioux, who number about 5,000, and the Pawnees and Omahas, who have 1,800 warriors." On July 31 it

stated, "that owing to the exposed condition of the Nebraska frontier to Indian depredations the administration at Washington has suspended all operations under the conscription act in Nebraska and Dakota."[20] The Indian outbreak of the following year did not come entirely without warning.

On October first the Second Nebraska Cavalry was relieved by Companies A, D and H of the Seventh Iowa Cavalry, and Major John S. Wood, of that organization, relieved Colonel Sapp of the command of the post.[21] The strength of the garrison was maintained at approximately two hundred seventy-five men during the winter. In the spring of 1864 the number of troops was temporarily reduced by the transfer of two companies of the Seventh Iowa Cavalry but was again brought up to strength in July by the arrival of Companies A and C of the Nebraska Veteran Cavalry from the Pawnee Agency and Omaha. These men had seen active service at Forts Henry and Donelson and at Shiloh. On July 18, Colonel Samuel W. Summers, of the Seventh Iowa Cavalry, relieved Major Wood of the command of the fort.

In July the routine of Fort Kearney was disturbed by a court-martial. Some officers had been accused of conduct contrary to the regulations, and several enlisted men stood charged with offenses ranging from desertion to murder. Brigadier General Robert B. Mitchell, who had distinguished himself as Colonel in command of the Second Kansas Volunteer

infantry, at the Battle of Wilson's Creek, and later in command of a cavalry brigade in the battle of Perryville, and who was then commander of the District, was at the post on a tour of inspection. When he found a number of cases which required attention, he ordered the court-martial to be called to clear the docket.

There were not enough officers at the fort to conduct the court-martial, so orders were issued to some stationed at nearby posts to report to Fort Kearney for such duty. One officer so ordered to report was Lieutenant Eugene F. Ware, of Company F, Seventh Iowa Cavalry, stationed at Cottonwood Springs (later known as Fort McPherson), one hundred miles west of Fort Kearney.

Lieutenant Ware received the order July 1st and set out that evening. "Knowing the Indian custom of not doing any fighting at night, I started for Fort Kearney and rode down fifteen miles to Gilman's ranch that night, with an escort of two men; the next day I rode fifty miles, and sent the escort back. The next day I got into Fort Kearney promptly and very much to the satisfaction of General Mitchell. Coming down the Platte, the mosquitoes and buffalo-gnats were very annoying. They seemed to be suddenly rising from damp places along the river; but as the breeze was from the south we did not get the full force of the inconvenience. When there was a lull in the breeze we suffered considerably,and

our horses much more. I got into Fort Kearney before noon, having made the hundred miles in about 42 hours. The road was on the south side of the river, at that time."[22]

Immediately after dinner on the third the court-martial convened. It was the rule that the court should have a majority of its members of a higher rank than the accused, and since a captain was to be tried, this added to the difficulty of securing a full quota of officers of proper rank. The members sat around a table in order of rank and each was attired in full uniform, no official decoration omitted. The cavalry officers even wore their spurs and silk sashes.

The charges and specifications were examined, and the witnesses questioned. "In those days there were no shorthand reporters, and all the evidence and proceedings had to be got up in long-hand, certified up to the commander, so that appeals and arguments might be made thereon."[23] After the witnesses had been examined and the evidence weighed the court came to a vote, the youngest officer in commission voting first, and so on up the line of rank.

In the course of the court-martial two officers were tried. One was tried for general worthlessness, drunkenness, want of discipline, and the spending of and embezzlement of his company's funds. Another was tried for misuse of his privilege of buying commissary goods at cost. He had purchased large quantities of flour, sugar, and dried apples.

"It was finally discovered that in one of the neglected kitchens of the officers' quarters, the captain's wife and boy were making apple pies and selling them for fifteen cents apiece. As the government furnished the wood and sold supplies cheaply, the boy made a great quantity of money by selling these pies to the overland immigration, and to the soldiers, and persons about the post. As near as we could figure, they had made six or seven hundred dollars on it, and the Captain had furthered the whole scheme. We considered it the limit, and let him out of the service, and put an end to that sort of business at the post."[24]

By midsummer of 1864 it was apparent that serious Indian difficulty on the plains was not far off. The Indians had been especially restless since the Sioux outbreak in Minnesota in August of 1862. While this disturbance had little direct bearing upon the region about Fort Kearney, it did have an indirect disturbing influence. Emigrants crossing the plains during the summer had reported sullenness on the part of the Indians, and the necessity for strict military organization west of Fort Kearney was recognized.[25]

At the time the country surrounding and adjacent to Fort Kearney was the home of the once powerful tribe of Pawnee Indians. The region a short distance west of this important military post was occupied by a still,more powerful tribe of Sioux. Between the two tribes was a stretch of

intervening territory claimed by both. There was almost from the first constant war between them, and this naturally diminished the number of each tribe. But the Sioux in nearly every engagement proved greatly superior to the Pawnees as warriors, and were almost invariably victorious over them; hence it was not long until the Pawnees were disposed to be on friendly terms with the adjacent white settlers, though the settlers were few in number.

"The Sioux also seemed friendly to the whites and both tribes, singular as it may appear, continued friendly with the whites until the Cheyenne and Sioux war broke out . . . in August, 1864, resulting in the Comanches joining the other hostile tribes. The final outcome was an Indian war -- premeditated and cunningly planned -- on the greatest traveled wagon road in the west, involving that part of the country for hundreds of miles."[26] The first outbreaks occurred early in July and caused great excitement and alarm among the settlers. One evening, about seven o'clock, a party of Pawnees appeared on Looking-glass Creek a short distance from the Pawnee Reserve in what is now platte County, Nebraska. Here they attacked Patrick Murray and his brother-in-law, Adam Smith, who, with a number of hands, were putting up hay. After cutting the horses loose the Indians shot an old man through the head killing and scalping him, and wounded Smith. As Mrs. Murray,

who was cooking for the party of haymakers, was extracting the arrow from Smith, she too was wounded by an arrow. A man by the name of Grimes was also wounded in this attack.[27]

About one hundred miles south of Looking-glass Creek, in what is now Jefferson and Thayer counties, Nebraska, the Sioux and Cheyenne tribes fell upon the settlers, and inflicted serious injury. On August 4 an attack was made along the Big Sandy and Little Blue rivers. Thirteen of the settlers were killed and Mrs. Hoe Eubanks and Miss. Laura Roper were carried off as prisoners by the Indians. Not only was there great loss of life by reason of the raid, but heavy property loss resulted as well. Loss was particularly heavy at the ranch of George Weisel, on the Big Blue River. Mr Weisel, in addition to his farming activities, kept a store at his ranch in which he carried a large stock of all kinds of goods used by freighters and teamsters. At the time of the Indian attack Mr. Weisel fled, with his family and neighbors, to Maryeville, Kansas. He was not able to return to his ranch for several days, but after the Indians had been driven away by a detachment of soldiers he returned to find his ranch, in common with those of his neighbors, completely gutted and his goods, chattels and crops destroyed.

Some years later, March 21, 1891, Mr. Weisel, then a merchant at Alexandria, Nebraska, prepared a claim against the Federal Government for his loss by reason of Indian

depredation. This claim was duly verified by Daniel Kneeland and was subscribed and sworn to before W.L. Whitney, a notary public in and for Thayer County, Nebraska, and bears his notorial seal. The claim for damages lists some $1,500 worth of foodstuffs, $2,000 in sundry items of clothing stock, and $6,000 for oats, corn and poultry destroyed. The total of the claim was in the amount of $9,506.50.[28]

Early in August the Arapahoes, the Brule Sioux, the Cheyennes and the Comanches began to murder and plunder in the Platte valley. James E. Boyd's ranch, ten miles east of Fort Kearney, was attacked, and at Pawnee Ranch, a short distance south, William Wilder's train was set upon and fought off the Indians from four o'clock until dark. News of these attacks was immediately sent to Fort Kearney. A detachment under Lieutenant John P. Murphy was sent to the Little Blue River. Smaller detachments were sent to Boyd's Ranch and to Pawnee Ranch. On August 12, 1864, the Omaha Republican reported the "the recent Indian murders in the Platte valley point clearly and unmistakably to a general uprising of the savage hordes who inhabit western Nebraska and Colorado, Idaho and Utah. Within 48 hours between 20 and 30 dead bodies have been found at different points west of us and we hear of numerous depredations upon stock and trains. Men have been murdered at Thirty Two Mile Creek, Lone Tree, Station and Plum Creek;

the pickets at Fort Kearney have been fired upon, the train destroyed at Plum Creek was burned up and thirteen men murdered. The Indians are led on in their infernal barbarities by white men painted and disguised as savages."[29]

Of all the Indian depredations in Nebraska the Plum Creek massacre was perhaps the most atrocious. A hundred Indians had attacked a wagon train at Plum Creek, thirty miles west of Fort Kearney on August 9th, and had ruthlessly sacked the wagon and killed thirteen men.

News of the attack was immediately telegraphed to Fort Kearney. Upon receipt of the news Colonel Summers took Company A and Field and Staff, Seventh Iowa Cavalry, and Company C, First Nebraska Veteran Cavalry, and proceeded to Plum Creek.[30] Upon arrival there he found that in addition to the thirteen men killed, there were five men, three women and several children missing.[31] The troops, except for a small escort for Colonel Summers back to Fort Kearney, were left at Plum Creek in command of Captain Thomas J. Major, of Company C, First Nebraska Veteran Cavalry.

On August 27, 1864, Lieutenant Colonel William Baumer of the First Nebraska Veteran Cavalry took command of Fort Kearney. The Indian attacks earlier in the month had stopped all traffic; freight, stage and mail, past the fort. Many of the stage stations had been destroyed and everything

was at a standstill. It was necessary for the military authorities to provide additional protection before traffic could be resumed in a normal manner. Accordingly additional troops from the First Nebraska Veteran Cavalry and the First Nebraska Militia were ordered to Fort Kearney. A post was established at Junction Station, forty miles east of Fort Kearney, and Company B, First Nebraska Militia, was ordered there as garrison. Also, a post was established at Millallas Station, fifteen miles west of Plum Creek, or forty-five miles west of Fort Kearney. A detachment was sent from the fort to garrison it. The strength of the post was maintained at about ten officers and two hundred fifty men, although several companies came and went each month. Companies A, C, F and K, First Nebraska Veteran Cavalry, made up the permanent garrison at the fort, and Captain Lee P. Gillette, of that organization, assumed command of the post on October first.

By that time affairs at the fort had become sufficiently adjusted so that detachments could be sent out to keep an eye on hostile Indians. On October eighth Lieutenant John P. Murphy, of Company F, was sent, with twenty-five men, on an expedition in a southeasterly direction from the post. The detachment was gone two days and examined the country thoroughly, but saw no enemy. On November 26th two more detachments were sent out. One, of

eighteen men under Lieutenant Murphy, marched to Pawnee Ranch on hhe Little Blue River. It reconnoitered the country adjacent to the headwaters of the Little Blue thoroughly without seeing any Indians and returned on November 30. The second, consisting of forty-five men under Captain Gillette, left to survey the region about the Republican River, with rations for six days.[32] It struck that river at the mouth of Spring Creek and observed the country along that stream and adjacent to it without seeing Indians. The detachment returned December 1, after marching a distance of one hundred fifty miles.[33]

On the morning of December 12, 1864, a detachment of sixty enlisted men under Lieutenant Murphy set out from the post for Plum Creek. From there it marched east down the Platte River for six miles, and thence south to Spring River at its mouth. It then proceeded to Big Beaver Creek and followed the course of that stream downward and struck the Republican River. From thence they marched back to Big Beaver Creek and continued up it for several miles, examining the adjacent territory until they crossed an Indian trail apparently four or five days old. Some distance beyond this trail they turned northward and proceeded toward Fort Kearney , where they arrived on the eighteenth. A distance of two hundred fifty miles was covered, but except for the one cold trail, no evidence of Indians was seen.[34]

After their depredations of September, 1864, the Indians were comparatively quiet for about threemmonths. Early in the following January the Cheyennes and Sioux made a raid along the Platte and took possession of the stage route for a distance of several hundred miles. "They played the mischief with everything in general, and Ben Holladay's stage property in particular. In their march through the valley they burnt a large number of stations, ran off several head of horses, and stole and burnt an immense amount of hay, grain, etc., belonging to the great stage man. They also committed a number of horrible deeds, besides inflicting great financial loss on a large number of parties engaged in freighting on the plains."[35]

A detachment of one hundred fifty-one men and four officers marched, on January 11, 1865, with one piece of artillery, in pursuit of Indians said to be encamped on White Man's Fork and the Republican River. They returned on the 25th, having penetrated to the Republican River at a point south of O'Fallon's Bluffs. They reconnoitered the country thoroughly without finding the enemy. They burned all the prairie grass on the line of march, and found wood abundant on all streams. The water was "plenty and good." They covered a distance of three hundred eighty-five miles on the two weeks march.[36]

On January 15, 1865, a detachment of exchanged prisoners of the First Nebraska Veteran Cavalry, consisting of one commissioned officer and fifty enlisted men, joined the garrison.[37] These were the first prisoners exchanged with the Confederated, who were returned to the post.

During the Indian raids about forty miles of telegraph line on the Laramie Road in the vicinity of Julesburg were torn down. In February Companies F and K of the First Nebraska Veteran Cavalry were sent from Fort Kearney to assist in rebuilding the line. They scouted the country carefully on the way out and back but returned February 24th, after accomplishing their work without having seen any Indians.[38]

Late in 1864, Captain Frank J. North was instructed by General Samuel R. Curtis, commander of the Department of Kansas at Fort Leavenworth, to enlist a regular company of Pawnees for scouting duty, to be equipped and uniformed as cavalry soldiers. Captain North went to the Pawnee Indian reservation, and after a great deal of difficulty, succeeded in recruiting a company of one hundred men. The Pawnees were reluctant to enlist because of few months before they had joined a company of scouts but had not received their pay as promised. Captain North's character and personnality were such, however, that he was able to gain the confidence of the Pawnees and enlist the company of one hundred men. This company

known as Company A, Pawnee Scouts, was mustered into United States service on January 13, 1865. Frank J. North was captain, Charles A. Small, first lieutenant, and James Murie, second lieutenant. Their commissions had been issued by Governor Alvin Saunders, of the Territory of Nebraska, on October 24th 1864.[39] This company reported for duty at Fort Kearney, February 11, 1865. On the 24th a detachment of twenty-five of these scouts, under Lieutenant Small, was sent on a scout. Small's orders were to cross the Platte River opposite Fort Kearney, and to ascend its north bank for thirty miles. From thence he was to proceed northward and penetrate if possible as far as the Niobrara River.[40]

During April and May, 1865, the post was reinforced by the arrival of several detachments of the Third United States Volunteer Infantry. These "United States Volunteers" were soldiers recruited from the military prisons of the North and were made up of Confederate enlisted men who wanted to get out of prison but who did not want to be exchanged back South. They had enough of fighting in the Confederate army and were willing to enlist in the United States army provided they were sent west and not required to fight against their brethern. Upon this condition they swore allegiance to the United States, enlisted, and were sent to the plains for duty against the Indians.

The first of such soldiers to be enlisted consisted of ffve hundred forty-three rebel prisoners recruited at Fort Delaware, Maryland, on May 28, 1863. Secretary of War Edwin M. Stanton, however, ordered such enlistments stopped August 21st, but later gave authority again to enlist prisoners. A short time later 1,484 were enlisted from the military prison at Point Lookout, Maryland, for the First and Second United States Volunteer Infantry. They were sent by General Grant to the Department of the Northwest for service.[41]

Men foŁ the the companies sent to Fort Kearney were recruited from the prison pens of Chicago and Rock Island. They were commanded by officers promoted from the ranks in the various state regiments. Captain Ware, who traveled from Senaca, Nebraska, to Fort Kearney with several of the officers of the "Third" describes them as being "of undoubted courage and ability, who had been selected from the capable sergeants of the State regiments, and I became very much attached to this captain and six lieutenants before I got through to Fort Kearney, for I had served in the same army down South with some of them, although I had not known them. They were as intelligent and capable a lot of men as you could hope to find; in fact, they were selected from the best, and averaged up

much higher and better than the average run of volunteer lieutenants."[42]

Samuel Bowles, editor of the Springfield,(Mass.) Republican, who was at Fort Kearney in May, 1865, writes of the enlisted men, "Among the present limited number of troops on the Plain are two regiments of infantry, all from the rebel army. They have cheerfully reenlisted into the federal service. We passed one of these regiments on the road yesterday, it having just come upon the line. They were all young but hardy looking men; and the Colonel, who is of course from the old federal army, testified heartily to their subordination and sympathy with the new service. They are known in the army as 'whitewashed reba' or as they call themselves, 'galvanized Yankees.'"[43]

Early in 1857 scurvy had broken out at the fort but was checked by providing a ration containing more potatoes. In April, 1865, scurvy again broke out "owing to the scarcity of vegetable diet."[44] The regular Government ration of that time consisted of:

12 oz. pork or bacon, or in lieu thereof 20 oz. fresh or salt beef.

22 oz. soft bread or flour, or 20oz. corn-meal, or 16 oz. of "hard Tack."

15 lbs. beans or peas (dried) to 100 rations

10 lbs. rice or hominy " " "

10 lbs. green or 8 lbs roasted doffee	to 100 rations
In lieu of coffee, 24 oz. of tea	" " "
15 lbs. of sugar	" " "
1 gallon of vinegar	" " "
20 oz. star candles	" " "
4 lbs, soap	" " "
60 oz. of salt	" " "
4 oz. pepper	" " "
1 quart of molasses	" " "
30 lbs, of potatoes (when practicable)	" " " [45]

The difficulty lay in the inability to secure fresh meat and vegetables in sufficient quantities. Potatoes were not always "practicable."

The Indian outbreak early in 1865, which resulted in heavy loss to the Holladay Stage Line, made travel across the plains an uncertain business. The garrison at Fort Kearney was called upon to furnish guards for the stage stations east and west from the post. Accordingly, on May 8th, forty-four enlisted men from the Third United States Volunteer Infantry were ordered to the four stage stations of the "Overland Mail Company" immediately west of the post. One non-commissioned officer and ten men were detailed to each station. On the following day thirty-six enlisted men from the same organization were ordered to the four stage stations immediately east of

the post on the north side of the Platte, one non-commissioned officer and eight enlisted men at each station. On the 12th twenty-eight more "galvanized Yankees" were ordered to the four stage stations east of the post on the south side of the river, one corporal and six privates at each station. The system of escort for the stages which had been worked out previously, whereby each stage was provided with armed guards between stations, was replaced by the arrangement of detailing a guard squad to each station.[46] Immediately ofter the close of the war a large number of troops were ordered to the western posts. Included in this vast movement were five regiments of "galvanized Yanks," ten other regiments of infantry, twenty-six cavalry regiments, and two regiments of artillery.[47] Many of these were stationed temporarily at Fort Kearney en route west.

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CHAPTER IX

Stage Coach and Freighter Days at Fort Kearney

In 1848 Fort Kearney on the Platte was an isolated place. Neither communication nor transportation had been regularly established and the soldiers at the post were almost cut off from the rest of the world. It was not until 1850 that any regular transportation or communication facilities were provided over the Oregon Trail and past Fort Kearney. The slow but constant emigration to Utah, and the admission of California into the Union in 1850, were factors which made more rapid transportation necessary.

Stage coach service was begun between Independence, Missouri, and Salt Lake City, Utah, in the summer of 1850. This service was made possible by the action of the government in awarding a contract for the carrying of the mail between these two points. The Oregon Trail past Fort Kearney was followed, thus giving the fort a mail and passenger service not a part of the military establishment. The service was monthly; a coach left Independence and Salt Lake City every four weeks, except in winter, carrying mail and passengers. In the winter the mail was carried by pack horses, no passenger service being provided. Two or three weeks were required to make the trip from Independence to Salt Lake City, 1,200 miles; but later, when stage stations

and relays of live stock were established along the road, the trip was made in less time. At first there was no definite schedule, but after the stations were established, a schedule was maintained with some regularity. During the first years of stage service little use was made of it by the public. The cost was borne largely by the compensation received for carrying the mail. Later, however, the stages became a popular means of overland travel and continued to hold that position until the first railroad to the Pacific coast was completed.[1]

Monthly stage service past the fort was continued until 1858 when a weekly service was inaugurated. To maintain their schedules the stage company had established stations along the route every ten or twelve miles. These were of two kinds, swing atations and home stations. The swing stations, ten or twelve miles apart, consisted of a stable, granary, and a room for one or two stock tenders. At these stations the horses were changed. The home stations, about fifty miles apart, were larger, for it was at these stations that the driver's route ended, and here passengers could secure meals. A home station was located at Fort Kearney about forty rods distant to the west from the fort. There was an office, storehouse, barn, stable, and an eating house, most of which were built of cedar logs, and plainly constructed. The logs had been hauled more than one hundred miles by team, and the

buildings were substantial and well answered the purposes for which they were used.[2]

The eating house at Fort Kearney was one of the best along the line. Writers probably mentioned the fact because the meals served at most of the stations were not very good. Mark Twain, who was a passenger overland in 1861, compares the bread, served at the stage stations, to Nicholson pavement, and relates that the bacon was condemned army bacon which the United States would not feed to its soldiers in the forts, and which the stage company had bought at a low price.[3] William Fulton, who was at Fort Kearney in 1863, writes, "At $1 each, meals consisting of bacon, bread, and coffee, with sometimes game," could be obtained, but that butter and eggs were unknown luxuries.[4] Frank Root mentions that he "seldom ate a meal between Fort Kearney and old Julesburg, in staging days, that was not made up inpart of choice, juicy steaks or superb roasts cut from the 'wild crooked-back' oxen . . . which were substituted for bacon and dry sides, while crossing the plains in those days".[5]

Fort Kearney was a busy place during the rushing days of overland staging. The heavy Concord coaches, drawn by their four or six horse teams, and carrying passengers and the overland mail, rolled in daily from Atchison, Omaha, Nebraska City, and California. Usually about the station could be found a busy throng composed of stage men, passengers,

freighters, drivers, soldiers, and a promiscuous crowd generally.

At this point the stages of the western Stage Company connected with the Holladay lines. The "Western" operated stages in Iowa and from Nebraska City and Omaha to Fort Kearney by way of the road on the north bank of the Platte. There was a considerable rivalry between these companies, and often in time of heavy travel, passengers from the Western line were forced to wait days at Fort Kearney for a seat in the westbound stage, because the through passengers from Atchison were always given preference by the Holladay line over those from the Western Stage Company's line. This caused much grumbling on the part of passengers and was not overcome until the Western line was taken over by Holladay in the sixties, when better accomodations were provided for the Omaha passengers.[6]

A stage company agent was always on duty at the Fort Kearney station.. Being at the junction of the two lines it was necessary to maintain an agent at this point. He attended to the passenger business and looked after the way pouch of mail which he opened daily at the fort. The agents who served at Fort Kearney were successively a Mr. Creighton,[7] W.A.Gillispie, George M. Lloyd, and Ed C. Hughes.

Despite the heat of summer or the cold blasts of winter, the stages usually went through on time. To the conductors

and drivers there was a fascination in seeing the familiar landmarks on their run. One conductor writes, "No place on the eastern division of the overland route was of more interesting history than Fort Kearney. When riding on the stage, it mattered not whether going east or west - I was always glad when the old coach had approached near enough to the fort so that I could get a sight of the flag floating above the garrison". On the west bound trip he knew that a third of the distance from the Missouri River to the Rocky Mountains had been covered and that, upon leaving the fort, they would be fairly out upon the plains. On the east bound trip Fort Kearney meant that two-thirds of the trip between Denver and Atchison had been accomplished. It was here also that the first sod buildings west of Atchison were seen, they having been erected in pioneer overland freighting, pony express, and staging days. "The post-office, built of sod - also used as the first telegraph office at the fort - although small, was in the early sixties one of the most prominent of the few buildings of that character between the Missouri River and the Rockies."[8]

Until the summer of 1864 the stage line encountered little difficulty with the Indians. In August of that year Indian troubles broke out and very seriously interfered with the operation of the stages. These depredations, the worst experienced on the line, were largely confined to the Platte

valley. The attacks were made by bands of Cheyennes, Sioux, Kiowas and Arapahoes, and extended for four hundred miles, east and west of Fort Kearney. They began on the Little Blue River, one hundred miles southeast of the fort and spread along the Platte valley, westward to Junction, on the South Platte River, to within eighty-five miles of Denver.

In these depredations along the Platte not only were scores of people butchered but property valued into the thousands of dollars was destroyed. It is estimated that the loss of cattle, mules and other property stolen or destroyed in these raids amounted to nearly one million dollars.

Every stage station on the eastern division of the line between Big Sandy and Thirty-two miles Creek, except the one at Fort Kearney, was burned and the stock run off. The garrison at the fort was powerless to check these raids, which were well planned and daringly executed by the savages, over a radius of more than two hundred miles. The Indians did not dare to attack the station at Fort Kearney, which was but forty rods from the quarters of some four hundred soldiers, but were able to successfully swoop down upon all of the others along the line.

The stage company, in justice to the large number of its employees, as well as for the safety of the stock and other

property, was obliged to abandon fully five hundred miles of line, leaving its hay, grain, provisions, household furnishings, etc., to the tender mercy of the savages. Almost every ranch house within one hundred fifty miles east or west of Fort Kearney was deserted,the owners having been forced to flee, with their families, to the forts along the way. Many took refuge at Fort Keamney, while others fled to the forts nearer their homes. Even the oldest Indian traders, most accustomed to the ways of the Indians, were forced to flee also.

Commerce on the plains came to a standstill. The overland mail, which had been running on a daily schedule regularly for more than three years, stopped. The flow of emigrants across the plains ceased entirely and hundreds of wagons loaded with all kinds of freight were forced to corral at the most convenient point and remain motionless for weeks. Business of every nature along the "overland" was completely tied up. To the west of Fort Kearney there was no traffic on the road, no pilgrims coming or going, and the Indian scare was all-prevailing. Troops were sent out from Fort Kearney by Colonel William Baumer, the commanding officer, to guard the trail from further attack. Additional posts were temporarily established at Junction Station, forty miles east of the fort, and at Millallas Station, fifty miles west. Troops were sent from Fort Kearney to

9

garrison each of these stations. In all, stage and other traffic were tied up for a period of six weeks.

Stage traffic past Fort Kearney was re-established and continued, somewhat irregularly, for about three months. A fresh Indian attack, however, broke out about the twentieth of the following January, when the Cheyenne and Sioux Indians made another raid along the platte, and took complete charge of the stage route for several hundred miles. Holladay's stage property suffered greatly, the redskins burned a large number of the partially rebuilt stations, stole and burned all hay and grain in sight and ran off all of the horses. They also played havoc with the few freighters who happened to be on the road during that time of the year.

Again commerce over the Oregon Trail was paralyzed, and no west bound stage coached were able to leave Atchison for several weeks. A large amount of mail for Forts Kearney, Cottonwood and Laramie and for Denver accumulated, with no way of moving it. After careful deliberation the stage authorities decided, about the first of February, to try to get a stage through. The regular conductor, whose turn it was, refused to go, so Frank Root was chosen to undertake the hazardous trip. He started out from Atchison, February seventh, with a coach loaded with more than a ton of accumulated mail. He was armed with a brace of revolvers and a breech loading rifle, and trusted to Providence to get through.

From Atchison to Fort Kearney all went well. The overland road was good and as there was little Indian excitement on that end of the division, good time was made. At the fort all was excitement and around the military headquarters and stage station the wildest rumors of Indian depredations west were afloat. In view of these rumors the "Overland" officers decided that it would not be best to send the stage on at night. The division agent ordered the stage to remain at Fort Kearney over night, since most of the run of one hundred miles to Cottonwood Springs could be made in daylight.

"For fourteen hours," writes Root, "we tarried at the fort, much of the time discussing the rumors of Indian raids. Getting an early start before daylight the next morning, which was the tenth of February, 1865, with the stage stock in splendid condition, we started off at a lively gait up the Platte. Cottonwood Springs was reached a little after nine o'clock at night, after a ride of about sixteen hours. Much of the road during the day was in poor condition; still we made over six miles an hour, including all stops. For seventy-five miles of the distance, the road, which formerly was fairly swarming with white-covered prairie-schooners as far as the eye could reach, now seemed to be as barren as a desert. Not a moving vehicle except the stage was to be seen for nearly the entire distance. All the ranches were deserted, the owners with their families having hurriedly

fled for their lives. Compared with former trips, along this part of the Platte, the journey was a very disagreeable and lonesome one."[10]

Along the road were still horrible reminders of Indian atrocity. Fresh graves were numerous, and at Cottonwood Springs excitement was high. Fresh rumors came in from all sides and it was a matter of conjecture as to how long the stage would have to remain there. The Indians still held undisputed possession of about one hundred fifty miles of the line and no stage or freighting outfits had gone over the route for several weeks.

Resumption of stage traffic was further delayed by the fact that, when traffic was resumed, each stage would have to be hauled at least two hundred miles by a team of four or six horses without change of stock. In addition to the regular load of passengers and mail, every pound of hay and grain which the animals would consume would have to be hauled also. Under such conditions but thirty five to sixty miles would be the maximum days distance which could possibly be expected. It would take several weeks, at the least, to again establish stations en route and stock them with animals, hay and grain.

While Root was at Cottonwood Springs the following order from the commanding officer at Fort Leavenworth passed over the wire: "Headquarters, Department of Missouri, Fort

Leavenworth, February 11, 1865. Brigadier General Mitchell, Omaha: I have just informed the Overland Mail Company that I am prepared to protect their mail through this department. See that the proper protection is given it from Fort Kearney west to insure its safety. (Signed) Grenville M. Dodge, Major General."[11]

Needless to say, the receipt of this news was highly gratifying to the officials and employes of the stage line. It was also received with satisfaction by the owners of the wagon trains tied up all along the Platte, and they got ready to move at once. The stage company at once began to restock its line from Fort Kearney up the Platte to Bijou Creek, a distance of some three hundred miles.

Root stayed at Cottonwood Springs six days, leaving on February 16, with three Concord coaches and a vast amount of mail for Colorado, Utah and Montana, besides the accumulated letter mail for the Pacific coast. He reached Julesburg at 11 A.M., Sunday, February 19, in a driving blizzard and arrived in Denver two days later, without incident. He remained there until March 2, when he left for Atchison on a Concord coach, with seven passengers and a large load of mail. He arrived at Fort Kearney at 9:30 A.M., March 7, and got to Atchison on March 10, having been gone since February 7.

When traffic was regularly resumed it was found necessary to station soldiers at frequent intervals along the

south side of the Platte River. Details for this purpose were sent from Fort Kearney and the posts west. Each stage, pursuant to General Dodge's order, was attended by a guard of mounted soldiers from Fort Kearney. To better protect themselves against possible Indian attack, emigrant and freight outfits were required to be formed into large trains by uniting the individual outfits, before being permitted to go west of the fort. The men in the trains were organized and drilled, so that every man knew his duty in case of attack. The officers at the fort also saw to it that the trains were provided with suitable arms and ammunition, so that should the occasion require, they could resist a considerable body of Indians.

After the Indian scare it was difficult to secure stage drivers, even though the highest wages were offered. This was especially true during the summer of 1865. William F. Cody, or better known now as "Buffalo Bill," had been a rider on the old Pony Express, and being without a job, applied for work as a stage driver. His courage and integrity were well known so he was employed at once. Writers rate him as not only one of the best Pony Express riders, but also as a good overland stage driver. Cody drove a handsome gray team, a favorite with the drivers, and his run was usually from Fort Kearney to Plum Creek, thirty five miles distant. His expert knowledge of the whole route from Fort Kearney to Salt

Lake City, however, made it possible to use him anywhere along that division of the line.

Even by the latter part of May conditions were not yet normal on the plains. Samuel Bowles started from Atchison on May 21 and was impressed by the high price which the grain for its horses cost the Overland Stage and Mail Company on account of the havoc made by the Indians the preceding season. He and his party were alarmed by the lateness of the last stage from the west before their departure, it being eighteen hours late. It had been attacked by Indians about half way between Fort Kearney and Atchison. "It is the first raid of the redskins this season," writes Bowles, "and so thorough precautions had been made by General Connor, who has charge of the troops along that route, that it was believed there would be no trouble, the stages had assumed their old certainty and regularity, came in here every day within half an hour of the schedule time, and left precisely at eight every morning and timed their arrivals at the stations along the route so certainly that the keepers had the meals all cooked and warm as the stages drove up, all the way from here to Salt Lake City. But today's news shows that some of the Indians had broken through or run around the military lines. They commenced by ambushing a party of some twelve to twenty soldiers, mostly converted rebels, on their way up from Leavenworth to Fort Kearney,

but without arms. Two of these they killed outright, and most of the rest they wounded so savagely that they will probably die. The next day they assaulted the incoming stage, which had some six or eight passengers, men, women and children, circling around and around the vehicle on well-mounted horses, and shooting their arrows fast and sharp - only one had a musket, and another a pistol - at horses and passengers. The horses were whipped up, the men on the coach had two rifles and kept them in play, and thus the Indians were held at bay until the protection of a station and a train was secured, when the attacking party, finding themselves baffled, retired. They numbered about twenty-five in all, and their appearance on what was supposed to be the safest part of the route, and the one least protected by soldiers, has made some excitement."[12]

The Indian danger was not entirely removed until after the era of the stage coach had passed, although during the last years, when the stages connected with the railroad, traveling was comparatively safe.

Stage coach days were numbered before they began, but during its day the stage coach rendered great and never-to-be- forgotten service. So far as Fort Kearney was concerned staging days were over after 1866, for on October fifth of that year the Pacific railroad was completed to the one hundreth parallel, fifty miles west of Fort Kearney.

Overland freighting from the Missouri River towns followed the same route past Fort Kearney as did the stage lines and the emigrants. The era of freighting may be said to have begun with the contracts let by the government for supplying the Utah expedition of 1857, although some freighting had been done prior to that time. The firm of Russell, Majors and Waddell, had numerous contracts for the hauling of supplies to the army of 5,000 men commanded by Colonel Albert Sidney Johnson. This firm hauled over 16,000,000 pounds of supplies from Nebraska City, Nebraska, and from Leavenworth, Kansas, to Utah in the year 1858, and required over 3,500 wagons and 20,000 oxen to haul them. In March of that year they contracted to furnish the Utah army with 3,500 head of beef cattle from the ox trains - in fat and healthy condition - at $7.50 per hundred, over a period of fifteen months.[13]

By the early sixties Fort Kearney had become an important station on the freighting and stage routes. "In the rushing days of overland freighting and staging it always appeared to be a lively spot around Fort Kearney. All the vast traffic of the plains by the Platte Valley route went across the military reservation and within a short distance of the old government post. Hundreds of white-covered 'prairie schooners' were daily seen on the great highway. Long trains, heavily loaded with every description of freight,

and hauled by oxen, mules, and horses, could be seen going west or east at almost any hour of the day."[14]

The roads from Plattsmouth and Nebraska City joined about thirty miles from the Missouri River. The road from this junction to Fort Kearney was the best of all the eastern branches of the Platte route for freighting purposes. There was but one stream of any importance to cross, Salt Creek, and that had a rock bottom easy to ford. There was a abundance of grass, wood, and water all the way to the fort. The road was hard, dry and nearly level for the greater part of the way. It followed the Platte valley for the last one hundred miles. From Nebraska City the distance to Fort Kearney was a two hundred miles, and from Plattsmouth, one hundred eighty-five. The only difficulty experienced by freighters on this route was the uncertainty of Missouri River navigation from St. Joseph north, hence many of the outfits started from the Missouri city rather than from Plattsmouth or Nebraska City.

The road from Omaha to Fort Kearney was first opened by the Mormon emigration, and followed the north bank of the river. It had many natural advantages, was a broad trail, with but gentle rise, (about eight feet to the mile), and no difficult streams to ford. It passed over an undulating prairie country which was well wooded and watered. The northerly location of Omaha, however, hundreds of miles from

the terminus of any railroad, prevented this route from being very extensively used by regular freighters, although it was the shortest route to Fort Kearney, being about one hundred eighty miles distant. Although not extensively used by freighters it was much traveled by emigrants to Pike's Peak and to California and was used exclusively by the annual Mormon expeditions, which started from Florence, some three miles to the north of Omaha.

The old Mormon trail extended up the north bank of the Platte, but there was a crossing opposite to Fort Kearney connecting with the routes south of the river. The Mormons usually kept to the north bank, wishing to avoid coming in contact with the "Gentile" emigrants, most of whom followed the trail to the south of the river.

From Fort Kearney the carrying trade to the gold regions followed the great military road to Fort Laramie and from thence along the Sweetwater River and through the South Pass. Of it a writer in 1860 said, "a better natural road does not exist anywhere in the United States."[15]

Accurate statistics on plains freighting are difficult to secure. The enterprises were private and such books as were kept were seldom preserved. The risks involved in the business were so great, even though the chance for profit was sometimes good, that nearly every freighting firm, sooner or later, went into bankruptcy. When this

occured it was unlikely that any books or papers of importance would be saved.

Hunt's Merchants' Magazine for January, 1861, gives some interesting figures for the carrying trade of 1860. According to these statistics 36, 074,149 pounds of freight were transported diring that year. 16,439,134 pounds were hauled out of Kansas City, most of this probably going over the Santa Fe trail, although a part may have followed the old Oregon Trail route. To carry this tonnage originating at Kansas City required 7,000 horses and mules, 28,000 oxen, more than 3,000 wagons, and employed over 7,000 men.

Freight passing over the Platte route and past Fort Kearney, started from Atchison and Leavenworth, Kansas Territory, St. Joseph, Missouri, and Nebraska City and Omaha, Nebraska Territory. From Atchison, 6,007, 943 pounds were sent, from Leavenworth, 5,656,082 pounds: from St. Joseph, 1,672,000; from Nebraska City, 5,496,000; and from Omaha, 713,000; making a total of 20,000,000 pounds for the season. To handle this enormous tonnage over the Platte route required 40,000 oxen, 4,000 wagons, and employed more than 4,500 men.

The same statistics estimate that the total capital invested was $5,545,900, the value of the oxen alone, at thirty-five dollars a head, being $1,378,500. The average

wagon cost one hundred fifty dollars, this item running well over a million dollars. Only the allurement of large profits could attract such huge amounts of capital, and had it not been for the depredations of the Indians, freighting firms would have shown good profits. With good luck one trip often paid for the capital outlay of the train. The Indians however, could not be classified as "good luck."

Wagon freighting across the plains increased each year during the decade following 1859, and probably was at its height from 1863 to 1866. During that period Russell, Majors and Waddell had 6,250 wagons and 75,000 oxen on the road.[16] According to a census taken for the year 1865, there were employed in the movement of goods, grain, and other stories, westward from Nebraska City alone, 7,365 wagons, 7,231 mules, 50,712 oxen and 8,385 men. The amount of freight leaving this one point was 31,445,428 pounds. Frank A. Root describes the freight movement of that year past Fort Kearney. "The traffic on the plains over the old military highway had grown to be immense long before the country through which it passed was settled, except in a few localities. As many as five hundred heavily loaded wagons a day have often been counted as they passed the fort, many of them with supplies for Forts Laramie and Bridger, besides great numbers destined for merchants

in the Mormon capital. In six weeks during the spring of 1865 a count was kept, showing that no less than 6,000 wagons, each loaded with from one to four tons of freight, had passed the Government post, bound west. Nine hundred of them passed in the last three days of the count."[17]

Until Fort Kearney was reached, the freighters were out of touch with the rest of the world. The telegraph line did not follow the route which they took, but instead, went up the river from St. Joseph, through Brownville, to Omaha. From there it followed the north bank of the Platte River to a point opposite Fort Kearney, where it crossed the river to the fort. Here the freighters could again have the advantage of communication. This proved very helpful to them for, with the aid of the telegraph, they could keep posted on the prices of grain, produce, provisions, etc., at allof the leading eastern markets. One Atchison firm, with a large quantity of whiskey en route across the plains during the Civil War, made about $50,000 additional on their shipment by adding a special tax which Congress had imposed after their liquors had left the Missouri River. The news of this tax reached their ox train by telegraph.

Freighting outfits were not permitted to camp on the military reservation at Fort Kearney, owing to scarcity of grass. Many of them camped, therefore, at Dobytown, at the western edge of the reservation, and but two miles from the

fort. Here they were protected by the fort and were able to make necessary repairs before going on. As a result quite an outfitting town grew up at Dobytown, which flourished until the freighters were supplanted by the railroad.

The building of the Union Pacific Railroad made past Fort Kearney in 1866, revolutionized freight transportation. The old overland trail fell into disuse and the fort was no longer a factor in staging or freighting.

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CHAPTER X

Fort Kearney after the Civil War

During the war need for troops in putting down the rebellion caused the withdrawal of all regular army regiments from Fort Kearney. The garrison consisted of volunteer organizations which rendered good service, but their number was always small. As a result, the Indians became warlike and caused serious disturbances along the overland trail. Peace released large numbers of trained troops and these efficient men were sent to Fort Kearney and other western posts to hold the hostile Indians in check. By June, 1865, forty-eight officers and 1,352 men of volunteer organizations, under the command of Lieutenant Colonel William Baumer, of the First Nebraska Cavalry, were stationed at the fort.[1] Pursuant to General Dodge's order of February 11, detachments were sent from Fort Kearney to guard the overland route. The large garrison made plenty of men available for scout duty and several scouting parties were sent out to reconnoiter the country recently overrun by the Indians.

On June 13 one hundred mounted men were detailed under Lieutenant John P. Murphy on an expedition to the eastward to scout the country around Columbus and the North Loup Fork. On the same day Lieutenant W.H. Parker started with a detachment of twenty-five men as escort to horses

being sent from Fort Leavenworth to Julesburg. Two days later Lieutenant John Talbot was sent with a detachment of eighty mounted men across the Platte on an expedition to scout the South Loup Fork. On the twenty-eighth Sergeant Armstrong went with fourteen enlisted men to survey and scout the region southwest of Plum Creek.[2]

Lieutenant Colonel Baumer was relieved of the command of the post on July 18, by Captain E. B. Murphy, of the Seventh Iowa Cavalry. Two days later the garrison was reinforced by Company A, Seventh Iowa Cavalry. On July 24, Company A, of the First Nebraska Cavalry, was sent to garrison a new station at Pawnee Ranch, on the Little Blue River. This region had been restless since the Indian outbreaks of the preceding summer and a few weeks prior to the sending of this detachment had been the scene of another attack when a band of Indians ambushed a detachment of unarmed "Galvanized Yanks" on their way from Fort Leavenworth to Fort Kearney, killing two of the soldiers. A stage also was attacked. It was deemed necessary to garrison this station, at least temporarily, for the protection of those using the trail.

Guard for the stage stations east and west from the fort, begun in May, was continued throughout the summer. Detachments from the Third U. S. Volunteer Infantry were used for this duty. Similar guards for the stations farther west were detailed from the garrison at Fort Cottonwood and Fort

Laramie. As in the region about Fort Kearney, the route west was protected by small garrisons located at stations some thirty or forty miles apart. At these places, temporary camps, the troops were quartered in hastily built stockades made of logs set in the ground, and with a number of port holes in each side.

At this time Colonel Thomas Moonlight, of the Eleventh Kansas Cavalry, was commander of the district of Colorado, Department of the platte, with headquarters at Fort Laramie. In May some of Colonel Moonlight's men captured two Ogallala Sioux chiefs, Two Face and Black Foot, and their bands. The chiefs had in their possession Mrs. Joseph Eubanks and her little daughter, who, with Miss Laura Roper, had been carried away captives the preceding August, in the Indian raid on the Little Blue River, one hundred miles southeast of Fort Kearney. Miss Roper was recovered near Denver, after about three months captivity, upon the payment by the government of a ransom to some Indians who claimed to have purchased her from her captors.[4] Mrs. Eubanks and her child had not been located until Chiefs Two Face and Black Foot were captured. Colonel Moonlight's report of the incident was as follows:

"I have the honor to submit the following report of the capture of Two Face and Black Foot, Sioux chiefs of the Ogallala tribe, along with their bands, and the execution of the two chiefs. About the 18th inst. some Indians were

discovered on the north side of the Platte, near the Indian Village, encamped 10 miles east of Laramie. Mr. Elston, in charge of the Indian village, took a party of Indian soldiers and captured what was found to be Two Face, having a white woman prisoner (Mrs. Eubanks) and her little daughter, whom he had purchased from the Cheyennes. During the same evening and the next morning early, the other Indians who were with Two Face and who had fled on the approach of Elston's party were also captured and lodged in the guard house here." Black Foot and his companions were captured and placed in the guard house with the others, making six men in confinement. "Both of the chiefs openly boasted that they had killed white men and would do it again if let loose; so I concluded to tie them up by the neck with a trace chain, suspended from a beam of wood, and leave them there without any foothold. The property captured was as follows: six United States mules, three United States horses, five mules not branded, but I believe claimed by some party down the river, and fifteen ponies, in miserable condition, which I left in charge of Mr. Elston for the use of the Indian soldiers in scouting. The other animals were turned in to the acting assistant Quartermaster, to be taken up on his return. On the person of Two Face was found $220 in greenbacks, which I gave to Mrs. Eubanks, also $50 taken from another of the band. This lady was captured by the Cheyennes on the Little Blue

last fall, where her husband was killed, along with several others. She was treated in a beastly manner by the Cheyennes, and purchased from them during the winter by Two Face and Black Foot, who compelled her to toil and labor as their squaw, resorting, in some instances, to lashing. She was in a wretched condition when she was brought in, having been dragged across the river Platte with a rope. She was almost naked, and told some horrible tales of the barbarity and cruelty of the Indians."[5]

Those familiar with conditions on the plains during the summer of 1865, were confident that serious Indian trouble was ahead. Memory of the Chivington massacre the previous November, in which the soldiers had barbarously slaughtered several hundred of Black Kettle's band, including a large number of women and children, at Sand Creek, Colorado Territory, burned deep into the Indian mind and made him bloodthirsty for revenge. Descriptions of this brutal attack by members of the Colorado regiments participating are published in the government documents, but their details are so revolting as to be beyond narration. The massacre caused much unfavorable criticism in the east of the government policy, for people there did not agree with the Rocky Mountain News of Denvex which said that Chivington and his men had "covered themselves with glory," the easterner believing rather that they had covered themselves with blood.

"But men who lived with their wives and children in safe places in the East, and knew only the Indians of the Leatherstocking Tales...saw what had taken place through other eyes. They were filled with indignation. The subject appeared in Congress. It was referred to the joint Committee on the Conduct of the War, of which Senator B.F. Wade was chairman."[6] There was much discussion. The committee found it difficult to believe that Chivington and his men, wearing the uniform of the United States, could have been guilty of such acts of barbarity. It further expressed the opinion that Chivington and such others responsible ought to be punished.

The Indian was no fool. He saw that the massacre was disavowed by the government and condemned by the people in the East generally. Any salutary effect which the punishment might have had upon the tribes was lost by the Indian's consciousness of a divided feeling on the part of the white man. And, too, had not the Indian done as he pleased on the plains for the past four years, without hinderance? Was there any reason for him to believe that the government would be any more effectual now?

During 1865 the government made an attempt to reach agreements with the plains tribes which would restore peace, and these attempts were partially successful. The Cheyennes, remembering the disaster at Sand Creek, were taken care of at the Little Arkansas treaty in October. They agreed to leave

their Colorado reserve and move to another route of the Arkansas River, and promised not to camp within ten miles of the trails. The government made special appropriations for payment of indemnity to the widows and orphans of those slain in the Chivington massacre. Similar treaties were made with the Sioux and other tribes. Of these treaties, the Commissioner of Indian Affairs commented. "These treaties were made and the Indians, in spite of great suffering from cold and want of food endured during the very severe winter of 1865-66, and consequent temptation to plunder to procure the absolute necessaries of life, faithfully kept the peace."[7]

During the fall of 1865 the volunteer troops were withdrawn, company by company, from Fort Kearney. Captain Charles Fisher, of the Third U.S. Volunteer Infantry, assumed command of the post on October 15. The following month detachments from the Third were ordered to Fort Leavenworth to be mustered out and Captain George O. Sokalski, of the Second U.S. Cavalry, took command at the fort on November 26. Companies A and B of the Second Cavalry, which joined the garrison on the prededing day, were the first troops from the regular army to relieve the volunteer regiments of duty on the plains.[8]

Late in 1865 the military authorities resolved to open a road from the Missouri River to the Montana gold fields. Without any direct route, there were several which might be followed. The first, along the Missouri River by

way of Dakota, following the route of Lewis and Clark, involved many unnecessary miles and was longer than those madly rushing for gold were willing to follow. The second followed the Oregon Trail past Forts Kearney, Laramie, Bridger and Hall. At Fort Hall a road branched off running directly northeast to Virginia City, Territory of Montana. This road was also too long, since many of the miles west had to be retraced. The third ran by way of Denver, Virginia Dale, Fort Halleck and Bridger Pass and Fort Bridger to Salt Lake City. From here it went directly north and west along the Snake River to Desert Wells and Eagle Rock, where it crossed the Snake and followed to Pleasant Valley, Idaho, and thence over to Virginia City, Territory of Montana. This road was long and roundabout, and offered every difficulty from the Indians which could be found along any road.

A fourth possible route lay over the Oregon Trail, past Forts Kearney, Cottonwood, and Laramie. From Fort Laramie the way went northwest into the Powder River country, along the east side of the Big Horn Mountains, across the Powder, Crazy Woman's Fork, and Tongue River to the Big Horn. Thence it followed west over Dubois Creek, Pryor's River, Clark's Fork, the Stillwater and the Boulder to the Yellowstone River, which was crossed by ferry near Bozeman Pass. From here it went on the short distance to Bozeman and Virginia City. This trail had been blazed by John Bozeman in the winter of 1862-63 and was the shortest to the gold

fields. "The difficulty in using this fourth route was that it led into the heart of the Indian territory, the invasion of which the white race had been forbidden by a treaty made by our government with Sioux chiefs at Fort Laramie in 1851, and renewed and amended in 1865, allotting special land for the exclusive use of the Indians."[9]

Despite this difficulty the military authorities resolved to open this route and Fort Kearney was made the base of operations. It was "the violation of these treaties on the part of our government, and the use of the Indians' choice hunting grounds, by ultimately establishing a military road across this favorite piece of country which precipitated a series of wars, the savageness and bitterness of which have not been equaled by any of our Indian wars. The contest for the possession of these lands to be used as a passageway to the mines in the north were characterized by the fierceness of the battles, the great loss of life by both contesting parties, and a general distrust and deep hatred between the red and white men that had not before been made manifest on our western plains."[10]

To carry out this plan, Colonel Henry B. Carrington, of the Eighteenth U. S. Infantry, was selected. The general plan was outlined by Major General John Pope, commander of the Department of Missouri, with headquarters at St. Louis. The Eighteenth Infantry, greatly depleted

by losses in the Civil War, was recruited to strength and was ordered to Fort Kearney late in 1865. Of this march Colonel Carrington writes, "From the Missouri westward all was sand, ever drifting into hills...The vegetation consisted entirely of sage brush, cactus and buffalo grass... In this vast extent of country, with the exception here and there of the red cedar, the cottonwood along the Platte was the only timber for fuel or building purposes, and nearly all buildings were of adobe, and these generally made of well disposed heavy blocks of turf. The roofs were of small poles covered with turf, and they were lined with clay...The whole region north and south of the belt was uninhabited, except by wolves, various kinds of game, of which buffalo were first in value, as well as in numbers, and various tribes of Indians, notably Sioux, Cheyenne, Pawnee, Arapahoe, Osage, Winnebago and others, all of whom were contending for the same trophies of the chase, which chiefly consisted of furs, as well as meats, and nearly all sharing in hostility to the transit, or the hunting of the white man...

"On the march from Fort Leavenworth to Fort Kearney, in 1865, one Indian village was passed, but not a single white man's house except ranches to accomodate emigrant trains. Grand Island, now the site of a mighty city, was nothing but a hay field for the garrison at Fort Kearney.

"The site of Lincoln, the present State Capital, was but a barren waste, while near the present prosperous city of Columbus was the famous Pawnee Indian reservation, the tribe not being moved to the Indian Territory until 1870. They numbered nearly 2,300 then; and now hardly 600. From their able bodied men, in 1866, I personally mustered into U. S. service for duty in Nebraska, then a territory, a battalion of four companies under Major North, but with difficulty, recording on the muster roll their Indian names as best understood by my interpreter."[11]

Mrs. Carrington (Mrs. Margaret Irvin Carrington, Colonel Carrington's first wife) also tells of the journey. "A winter's march from Fort Leavenworth to Fort Kearney in 1865, when the mercury was twelve degrees below zero and two feet of snow was forst to be shoveled aside before a tent could be pitched--when the prairie wind penetrated every garment, and drifting snows often blinded any advance--was deemed a sufficient experience to decide the ladies to undertake the journey and risk the issues of a Rocky Mountain winter."[12] The expedition arrived at Fort Kearney on December 11, in the midst of a blinding snowstorm.

Colonel Carrington took command of the post the same day. There were then at the fort thirty-eight officers and seven hundred ninety-eight men, most of them belonging to volunteer regiments. Nearly all of these were transferred

to Fort Cottonwood and Omaha, leaving Companies A, B, C, E, E, G, H, and Headquarters, of the Eighteenth Infantry to comprise the garrison.[13] The winter was spent in the ordinary duties of the post and in drilling the many new recruits who had but recently been enlisted in the regiment. Preparations were made for the movement, in the spring, to the Powder River region. "General Dodge... actively interested himself in the expected movement, and within a week after he received application for a steam sawmill, had purchased it and started it on its journey. The Interior Department furnished maps. The Smithsonian gave its contributions. Professors Silliman and Dana, of Yale College, supplied standard English and American works upon the various departments of natural science, while transit, level, and other instruments for surveys, observations, and such other duty as would aid in the exploration and development of a new country were also provided.

"A strange medley was that outfit, and its catalogue, to which something was constantly added, opened our eyes to a clearer view of the fact that we were to live a pioneer life, and begin a new career at the very foundation of border experience."

"Tools of all kinds were of course to be gathered together. Thus, there were mowing machines, and shingle and brick machines, doors, sash, glass, nails, locks, and every conceivable article that can enter into house-building.

Future blacksmiths, wheelwrights, painters, harness-makers, and carpenters, who were to be hunted up out of the command, had to be provided with the implements of their craft. All contingencies had to be anticipated, so that the day of arrival in the new country should be the day of commencement, and that there should then be no delay to wait for anything from the United States."

During these perparations certain changes were made in the military organization of the Department of the Missouri. General Pope announced the assignment of Colonel Carrington to "the command of the Mountain District, Department of the Platte", and ordered him to erect and garrison posts for the control of the Powder River Road.

On February 25, General Pope reported to the Secretary of War, Edwin M. Stanton, on "the conditions and necessities" of the Department of the Missouri, of which he was the commander: "The great civil war, lately ended so far as forcible resistence to the authority of the United States is concerned, has for the past five years so completely absorbed public attention.that the rapid growth of the Territories west of the Mississippi river had been almost entirely overlooked. With the close of active hostilities, attention is once more drawn to these remote Territories, and finds west of the Mississippi a condition of things in all respects as surprising as the most wonderful of the events which have marked our history elsewhere."

He pointed out that transport by wagon was already insufficient to supply the needs of these territories but that "the rapid progress of the several lines of Pacific railroad along the overland routes gives encouraging assurance that every day will diminish the cost and hazard to transportation." Once the railroads were completed to the mountains, he thought, most of the difficulties with the Indians would be at an end, and that troops would no longer be needed on the route, and the great expense of maintaining them would no longer be necessary. He expressed the belief, that in view of this great saving, it would pay the government to render material aid in the building of the railroad. According to Pope, the routes from Omaha, Atchison and Fort Leavenworth "were safe to travel, even in small parties."

"But there still remain, "he continued, "the great plains, which interpose between the mining districts and the agricultural country which supplies them. These plains can never be settled, and the military arrangements for the security of the great highways which cross them will necessarily be kept up as long as the Indians exist in that region. The three modes of procedure alone open to choice are as follows:

"1st. To restrict emigration or travel across the 'great plains' to one or two routes to be selected and

guarded by the government, and to make these routes secure by the concentration of a considerable force upon them.

"2nd. To collect together, by treaty or otherwise, all the Indian tribes which occupy the plains, and remove them entirely from that region, locating them on reservations on navigable rivers where they can be cheaply and conveniently supplied with the necessaries of life, and not be intruded on or molested by the whites; the necessaries of life being furnished by the government in compensation for the lands taken from the Indian, until he had been so far educated and brought to adopt the pursuits of civilized life as to be able to support himself.

"3rd. To pursue the unwise, expensive, and worse than inefficient system of combined civil and military management of Indian affairs which has for years been so fruitful of evil and so unbecoming a humane and just people."

The first plan General Pope considered to be "out of the question." The second was "perfectly practicable," but the third was the only plan which could be "legally pursued."[15] In the face of Indian problems Pope was as helpless as he had been when confronted by Jackson and Longstreet at the second battle of Bull Run. Colonel Carrington's expedition, under the ultimate direction of General John Pope, was doomed to failure before it ever left Fort Kearney.

On February 28, General Pope issued from his head-quarters at St. Louis, General Orders No. 27, which prescribed rules for the security of trains and travellers crossing the great plains during the season of 1866. Forts Ridgley and Abercrombie were designated as points of rendezvous for all trains or travellers using the northern route to the gold fields of Montana. Fort Kearney was designated as the point of rendezvous for all trains destined for Denver City, or Fort Laramie, by way of the Platte River route; and Forts Riley and Larned as points for trains to New Mexico.

At these posts all trains were to be organized for defense by electing a captain and other officers, and organizing the teamsters, employes, and any other persons, travelling with or belonging to the train, into one or more companies. No train consisting of less than twenty wagons and thirty armed men, properly organized was to be permitted to pass into the Indian country, and during the transit across the plains, the captain of the train was to be held responsible for the faithful observance of the rules and regulations laid down and the treaties with the Indian tribes, through whose country they would pass.[16]

Section III of the order directed that each commanding officer of the posts west of those designated as points of rendezvous should inspect each train passing his post to see that the necessary military organization had been

effected and that precautions were being taken against Indian attack. Should a train be found which had not complied with the regulations, the commanding officer of the post was ordered to detain the train until so organized and assurance given that no further violation should occur. In such a case the commanding officer of the next post ahead was to be notified so that he could made a thorough examination of the train when it should reach his post to see that the regulations were being observed.

All persons crossing the plains, except those in the military service of the United States or passengers in the vehicles of the overland stage lines, were required to band themselves together in the military organization outlined above or must attach themselves to some train consisting of not less than thirty armed men. The commanding officers of the posts as far west as Washington Territory, the State of Nevada and the Territory of Arizona were directed to arrest and hold all persons attempting to cross the plains in violation of the regulations set forth.

Section VI provided that whenever a military escort was thought necessary, the commanding officer of the military post beyond which the train was bound, would provide an escort for the train to protect it to the next military post, where, if necessary, another guard would be furnished; and these detachments would be supplied from one post to another until the point of danger was passed.

Commanding officers of the posts were also directed to furnish prompt assistance in case of Indian attack upon any train. The facts in each case were to be reported at once to the headquarters in St. Louis, specifying particularly whether those attacked had complied with the rules and had made as good a defense as could have been expected. Returning trains were to be subject to the same regulations as westbound and the post commanders were to see that they lived up to the rules also. The post commanders were also charged with the responsibility of exacting from all parties a strict observance of precaution against the Indians and to see that every train was equipped to protect itself as far as may be within its power.

General Pope based the justification of the order upon the fact that "the military forces are held responsible largely for any misfortunes which may befall such parties from Indian attacks, they claim and will exercise the right to lay down rules for such journeys made within the Indian country and the jurisdiction of the military authorities, as may be considered necessary to provide against danger, and at the same time not be oppressive or embarassing to emigration or travel."[18]

Upon receipt of the order at Fort Kearney the provost marshal was designated as the officer to see that the rules and regulations were obeyed. Root observed that it seemed to be the principal duty of the authorities at the post to keep people from proceeding on into the Indian

country without a minimum strength of thirty armed men, as provided for in the regulations.

In March, Colonel Carrington was directed to make a careful survey of the Platte River to locate a bridge crossing for the Union Pacific Railroad at Fort Kearney, to select a route for the line west along the south bank of the Platte River. Survey and scouting parties were sent out to examine carefully the terrain of the Platte valley as far south as the Republican River and its forks. They brought back detailed accounts of the timber which could be used for bridge-piles and reported regarding other essential details. They did not encounter any Indians on these surveys.[20] The railroad, however, did not cross the Platte River at Fort Kearney but kept to the north bank westward as far as the junction of the North and South Platte Rivers, one hundred miles west of the fort. On the fifth of April Colonel Carrington turned the command of the post over to Lieutenant Colonel William Baumer of the First Nebraska Cavalry, who assumed command for the second time.[21] Preparations for the Powder River expedition were continued. The departure of the expedition was delayed somewhat, awaiting the arrival of a large contingent of recruits from New York, which were necessary to bring the regiment to full strength.

By May 13 the recruits began to arrive at the fort

and were assigned to the various companies for preliminary drill. With the recruits came the Third Battalion of the regiment, and Company F of the First Battalion. These arrivals swelled the marching command to nearly 3,000 men. So large a force was necessary because "the routes to Salt Lake City were to be guarded, both the direct mail line and the northern road by Forts Laramie and Caspar, so that the eight companies of the Second Battalion remained as the fixed detail for the Mountain District."[22]

On May 16 Lieutenant General William T. Sherman, commander of the Military District of the Missouri, consisting of the Departments of the Ohio, the Missouri and the Arkansas, visited Fort Kearney. Of his visit Colonel Carrington reported that "upon full consultation with him I matured my plans for the establishment of the new posts (Fort Reno, formerly Fort Connor, later Fort Philip Kearney, and Fort Ransom to be built on or near Big Horn River), and the occupation of the proposed new line to Montana."[23]

Three days later the expedition was ready to move. "Rocking chairs and sewing chairs, churns and washing machines, with a bountiful supply of canned fruits, were duly stored inside or outside of army wagons; while turkeys and chickens, and one brace of swine added a specially domestic cast to some of the establishments prepared for the journey," writes Mrs. Carrington. "The last thing done looked a little warlike: the magazine was opened

and all the ammunition that could be spared from the fort was drawn out and loaded in wagons; but its comparatively meager supply gave little annoyance, as Laramie would be expected to furnish the deficit in case any further fighting material shold be required in the way of powder and lead. Then we had news that a battalion of the 13th Infantry had been ordered to build a new post at the foot of the Northern Black Hills, while two companies were to keep open the road thence to Fort Reno, thus giving fair assurance that the Indians of that location and Powder River valley would be watched and held to their own theater of action in case the Laramie council should fail to establish a peace on the Plains.

Colonel Carrington commanded the expedition and Major James Bidger assisted by H. Williams, was selected as guide. Both of these guides had ser9ed several expeditions to the Republican during the winter of 1865-1866. Thus organized, the command was ready.

With the expedition were two hundred twenty-six mule teams, beside ambulances, and the band of over thirty pieces furnished music until the column passed Kearney City, or "Dobytown", three miles west of the fort. Instructions from Lieutenant General Sherman were to "avoid a general Indian war if possible,"[25] and the command was prohibited from having any dealings whatsoever with the Indians along the way.

Fort McPherson (formerly Fort Cottonwood) one hundred miles west of Fort Kearney, was passed on May 26. Additional ammunition and an idle saw-mill were picked up there. On the 28th the command camped near the Old California Crossing. They met Colonel Otis and several members of the Peace Commission, with presents for the red men, on their way to the Laramie council. Here, also, news was brought that nearly three hundred Indians had crossed the Platte River nearby for a hunt along the Republican River. These had been given permission to leave Fort Laramie until other bands, due at the council, should arrive.[26] While encamped at this place "Old Little Dog," whose son burned Julesburg in 1864, came into camp and complained that one of the soldiers had entered his lodge and stolen his rifle. He was assured that his gun would be found and returned to him. After observing the performance of the band, and especially admiring the bell chimes, he sprang upon the bare back of his pony with remarkable agility for one who looked so old, and rode rapidly away.[27]

Fort Sedgwick was reached on May 30. This post was near Julesburg, which had been burned by Little Dog two years before. The place had been rebuilt, however, and numbered nearly a dozen houses and stores. Here a stop of three days was made in preparation for crossing the

South Platte River. A large flatboat had been sent up to Fort Sedgwick from Denver to be used in the crossing. The fort was a half mile from the river, so after carefully caulking the boat, the men laboriously moved it to the river. Here, under direction of Captain Ten Eyck, a cable was strung accross the river and the crossing began. All went well at first, there was sufficient water to float the craft nicely, but during the day the Platte fell more than a foot. Then trouble began in earnest. The water was too deep, in places, to ford, and too shallow in others to float the ferry. Finally, after drowning several of the mules and losing some of the supplies in the water, the crossing was made and the expedition was ready to move on. Two days of marching brought them to Louis' Ranch at the upper crossing of Lodge Pole Creek, where the expedition stopped a few days to rest and reorganize.

On July sixth the march was resumed. In the hot weather, the thermometer registered 101 degrees. Men and horses suffered intensely from the heat and were greatly annoyed by the buffalo gnats, and the thick heavy clouds of dust which arose from the march. I twas necessary to halt the command for ten minutes every hour. The officers and men put handkerchiefs on the neck and head to get all the protection possible, but there seemed to be no relief from

the withering heat and the ever biting gnats. "The ambulances soon filled with the lame and sun-struck," writes Mrs. Carrington, "and every vacant space in the wagon was similarly occupied. No trees relieved the dismal monotony, and every halt brought into requisition the service of our patient surgeons. The redious day at length spent itself, and we encamped at Mud Springs, just a time to receive the full benefits of a thunder-storm and small tornado, which grappled sternly with out canvas, and for a time threatened to unroof as well as drown us. At Mud Springs are both wood and water, but neither are abundant. In midsummer, the dry sandy bed of the stream shows only here and there a few small pools, but the shovel will soon start it, and any train will find a full supply by patient labor for an hour. It is always possible to secure buffalo chips enough to boil coffee and supply fuel for a camp oven, so that scarcity of timber in the immediate vicinity of water is not a serious embarassment until snows cover the ground."[28]

The expedition continued on through the intense heat and arrived at Fort Laramie on Sunday, June 17. Ten days later Powder River was reached and on July 28 the command got its first glimpse of Fort Reno, then an open post, which had been established in 1865 under the name of Fort Connor. Ten days were spent here in arrangements to distribute the battalion, in reloading the wagons and in relieving the

battalion, in reloading the wagons and in relieving the detachment of Fifth U. S. Volunteers, "Galvanized Yanks," which had been detailed as garrison. On July 9th, at four o'clock A. M., the command got under way, and after a four days march in torrid heat, arrived at the point on Big Piney Fork, just east of the crossing of the Virginia City road and about four miles from the Big Horn Mountains, where the new fort was to be erected. This post was to become the Headquarters of the Mountain district and was named Fort Phil Kearney. It was near this fort that the famous Fetterman Massacre occurred on December 21, 1866, and the equally famous Wagon Box Fight of August 2, 1867. Since these events are not directly concerned with the history of Fort Kearney, they will not be traced here.

Meanwhile Fort Kearney was the scene of bustling activity. It was the base from whence the Carrington expedition had been sent and through which supplies were later dispatched to the new forts. The departure of Carrington and his men left the garrison with six officers and and one hundred six men. In addition to the military force it was necessary to employ a number of civilians to assist the Quartermaster in his work of supplying the expedition on Powder River. These employees consisted of three clerks, three wagonmasters, one saddler, six herders, and fifty-three teamsters. The monthly payroll of these sixty-six

men amounted to $2,645. On June 24, Lieutenant Colonel H. W. Wessells, of the Eighteenth U. S. Infantry, succeeded Colonel Baumer in the command of the post.

During the summer of 1866 the Indians were comparatively quiet around Fort Kearney. The Laramie Council of 1866 had sought to secure the permission of the Indians to the opening of the Powder River road and proposed a general peace with the Sioux, Arapaho and Cheyenne tribes. The council, however, was not successful. Some of the chiefs objected strenuously to the white man sending troops to open the road before the Indians had given their assent. Despite this failure, the Indians were comparatively peaceful during the summer.

On October 6 First Lieutenant Charles E. Dibble, of the Eighteenth Infantry, became commander of the post, to be succeeded on November 21 by Captain Arthur McArthur, of the Thirty-sixth Infantry. He held the command for but two weeks and on December 4 relinquished it to Colonel and Major General of Volunteers John Gibbon, commander of the Thirtieth Infantry.[29]

Progress in communication and transportation was affecting the western forts. When Fort Kearney was established it took over a month for orders from high command to reach it. Troop movements were all made overland, slowly by foot, or by wagon train at the average rate of ten or

fifteen miles per day. The "record of events" reports that "Company I, 36th Infantry, Captain Arthur McArthur commanding, left post December 26, 1866, en route by railroad to Fort McPherson, in obedience to telegraphic instructions from Departmental Headquarters received December 26, 1866."[30] The day of slow communication and equally slow troop movement on the plains was at an end. The telegraph key and the iron horse had come to their own.

During the winter of 1866-1867 the large number of civilian employees of the Quartermaster at the fort was retained. There were employed two clerks, one storekeeper, one wheelwright, five carpenters, two blacksmiths, two mechanics, one saddler, four laborers, one hostler, two wagonmasters, and thirteen teamsters. Their monthly wage was $2,025.[31]

The service of the Indian scouts had been so valuable in the years preceding that Major Frank North was detailed in the spring of 1867 to enlist an entire battalion, four companies, or about two hundred men, of Pawnee Scouts. This he did, and on March 20 the battalion was sworn in at Fort Kearney. Major Frank North was the Battalion Commander, Captain Edward W. Arnold commanded Company A; Captain James Murie, Company B; Captain Charles Morse, Company C; and Captain Luther E. North (brother of Major Frank North), Company D.[32]

This battalion was a picturesque outfit, "a peculiar class of beings. They could not be induced to don the regular suit provided by 'Uncle Sam,' but dressed usually in a sort of combination garb, which they thought more appropriate, or, at least, that they imagined was better fitted to their individual and peculiar taste."[33]

At every public gathering or dress parade the officers tried to show off the scouts to the best advantage. "The Pawnee Scouts were reviewed", wrote Colonel William F. Cody, Chief of Scouts, "It was amusing to see them in their full uniform. They had been supplied with the regular cavalry uniform, but on this occasion some of them had heavy overcoats, others large black hats with all the brass accoutrements attached; some had regulation pantaloons, but only shirts. Part of them had cut the breech of their pantaloons away, leaving only the leggings. Still others had big brass spurs, but wore no boots nor moccasins.

"But they understood the drill remarkably well for Indians. The commands were given them by Major North, who spoke their tongue as readily as any full-blooded Pawnee. They were well mounted, and felt proud of the fact that they were regular United States soldiers. That evening after drill many ladies attended the dance of the Indians. Of all savages I have ever seen, the Pawnees are the most accomplished dancers."[34]

The Pawnee Scouts remained at Fort Kearney after organization until May 16, when the full strength, one hundred ninety-two men, was ordered to Fort McPherson and posts west for duty.[35]

Completion of the Union Pacific Railroad past Fort Kearney during the summer of 1866 seriously affected travel over the overland trail. After the railroad had reached the fort in August of that year the stage lines east were discontinued and Fort Kearney became the eastern terminus. The following year, as the railroad progressed westward, the stage lines along the Platte were discontinued altogether. The early passenger rates by rail were ten cents per mile, but even at this fare travel was cheaper, more comfortable and much quicker than by stage. Freighting was also seriously affected, although some freighters passed overland for several years after the railroad was built. General Sherman visited the fort a second time on August 17, 1866. Of this visit he reports, "On Saturday, August 17, General Dodge gave us a special train and accompanied us to the end of the Pacific railroad, the whole finished distance, 190 miles. The road lies substantially in the flat prairie bottom of the Platte, and we found the construction trains laying rails within about 5 miles of Fort Kearney, where our ambulances awaited us. The railroad lies on the north side and Fort Kearney on the south side and about 4½ miles will

be between the fort and its depot, designed about a mile and a half further than where we left the track. We had to cross the Platte, as mean a river as exists on earth, with its moving, shifting sands, and I feel a little lost as to know what to do or say about Fort Kearney. It is no longer of any military use, so far as danger is concerned, and now that the railroad is passing it in sight, but with a miserable, dangerous and unbridgable river between it, must be retained for the sake of its houses and the protection of wagon travel, all of which still lies to the south side of the river ... At Kearney the buildings are fast rotting down, and two of the largest were in such danger of tumbling that General Wessels had to pull them down, and I will probably use it to shelter some horses this winter, and next year let it go to the prairie dogs. Same of the temporary station at Plum Creek."[36]

Consequently the garrison at Fort Kearney was greatly reduced during the spring of 1867. About four hundred men had been kept there during the winter, but in May its troops, with the exception of a small detachment, were withdrawn. On May 16, Colonel Gibbon left the post with the detachments of the Thirty-sixth Infantry. With the departure of Major North and the Pawnee Scouts on the same day, but three officers and thirty-two men remained. Lieutenant W. L. Foulk, of the Thirty-sixth Infantry, assumed command of the depleted post.[37]

This small force garrisoned the fort during the summer of 1867. On October 4 Captain and Brevet Major Alexander J. Dallas, of the Thirtieth Infantry arrived at the post with Company A of that regiment and assumed command. The winter was an uneventful one, the garrison consisted of about ninety men, and there was little work, other than the routine garrison duty, to perform. On December 5, a letter was received from Headquarters, Department of the Platte, "calling attention to the fact that the telegraph is only to be used in urgent cases."[38] Evidently its use had become too popular and the expense was receiving the attention of the department commander.

In April, 1868, Major Dallas was ordered to furnish guards for the Union Pacific at Elm Creek and Plum Creek. The Indians had again become restless but there were no serious disturbances along the Platte. The Peace Commission, appointed by President Johnson in 1867, reported in January, 1868, that the Indians be colonized on two reserves, one on the north side of the railway lines and one on the south side. The Indian Territory was to be used as the southern reserve, where it was thought that 86,000 Indians could be settled. It was recommended that the northern reserve be created somewhere north of Nebraska and be alloted to the Sioux, where it was estimated that 54,000 could be provided for. The Commission thought that most

of the tribes ought to be put on the reserves but that individuals might be allowed to own land and become a part of the Western states.[39]

Major Dallas turned over the command of the post to Captain and Brevet Colonel Dunbar H. Ransom, of the Third Artillery, on May 20. About 8 P. M. on the night of the 27th a severe storm blew down the western half of the Quartermaster storehouse and unroofed the western end of the lower commissary storehouses. It also damaged greatly the south end of the company quarters.[40] These buildings were not rebuilt.

During the summer a large number of troop detachments passed the post en route west. Most of these troops were being sent to Forts Reno and Phil Kearney, Wyoming and Fort C. F. Smith, Montana, where the Indians were troublesome on the Powder River Road. On June ninth Company B of the Second Cavalry camped at the fort and on June thirtieth Company L of the same regiment stopped. Company L was on the way to the Little Blue River on a scout, and on July 17 returned and again camped while on the way to posts west. On July twenty-eighth Company I of the Tenth Cavalry passed the post with a surveying party.[41] These movements continued until cold weather set in.

On October 16 Captain and Brevet Major William Sinclair relieved Colonel Ransom of the command. On November

11 Captain Reuben N. Fenton arrived with Company C of the Twenty-seventh Infantry and took over the post. This force consisted of nine officers and fifty-five men and remained throughout the winter of 1868-1869 and was relieved June fifteenth by Company E of the Ninth Infantry. The captain of the company, Edwin Pollock, assumed command of the post. Captain Pollock had enlisted on February 25, 1861 in a Pennsylvania regiment as a private and had arisen from the ranks to his present commission. The garrison consisted of four officers and forty men.[43]

The garrison through 1870 consisted of Company E of the Ninth Infantry, the strength of which averaged four officers and fifty men. There was no Indian danger to require the attention of the troops, no scouting parties to send out and little to occupy the soldiers' time except routine garrison duty.

How different were the scenes of the seventies as compared with the fifties and sixties! No more were the long lines of emigrant wagons bound for Oregon or the gold fields passing Fort Kearney. The innumberable, heavily laden freighters on their way to Utah and the western settlements had dwindled away. The bull trains were gone and the crack of the bullwhackers whip was but an echo of a past day. Stages carrying mail and passengers which formerly stopped at the old station west of the fort had

been replaced by the railroad. The sturdy old Concords and their prancing six horse teams, with their important but capable drivers, a handful of reins in hand, were but memories. The horn of the Pony Express rider was stilled. No longer did he pass his mochila, containing the tissue paper letters, on to the next pony and rider waiting at the fort. The hoofbeats of the speeding pony were heard no more. Stirring war times were past; never again was a disloyal captain to spike the fort's cannon. Peace had come to the nation, even the warwhoop of the Indian was heard but in the tales of yesterday. The telegraph and the railroad, what changes they had made! The day of Fort Kearney was over, it had served its time well, but its time had passed.

On May 8, 1871, orders were issued to Captain Pollock to withdraw his command from Fort Kearney to Omaha Barracks. Nine days later the garrison departed, leaving the buildings and other fixed property in charge of the Post Adjutant, Lieutenant Edward Hoppy, of Company E, Ninth Infantry. With him were left one squad of soldiers.

The officers listed on the last post return, May, 1871, were: Edwin Pollock, Captain, Ninth Infantry, Co. E, commanding; Charles Mackin, Assistant Surgeon, U. S. A., Post Surgeon; Edward Hoppy, Second Lieutenant, Ninth Infantry, Co. E., Post Adjutant; Absent on Detached Service, James Regan, First Lieutenant, Ninth Infantry, Co. E; Casually

at Post, Edward J. Spaulding, Captain, Second Cavalry, Co. C; Thomas J. Gregg, First Lieutenant, Second Cavalry, Co. C, on duty with company.[43]

Special Orders No. 87, Headquarters, Department of the Platte, Omaha, Nebraska, May 22, 1871, sounded the death knell for Fort Kearney as a military post. The sections affecting the post were as follows:

"Section 2. Under authority of the War Department, Fort Kearney, Nebr., is discontinued as a military post. Company E, 9th Infantry, its late garrison -- now in the field -- will be considered as transferred to Omaha Barracks, Nebr.

"Second Lieutenant Edward Hoppy, 9th Infantry, will remain for the present, in charge of the buildings and other property, and perform such duty in connection with the troops on the Republican river, as may be required by the commanding officer. All the stores not likely to be required by him, will be boxed and made ready for shipment by wagons to Fort McPherson, Nebr.

"By command of Brig. Gen. Christopher Colon Auger, H. C. Littlefield, Capt. 2nd Art., Aide-de-Camp."[44]

And in Brigadier General Augur's Annual Report, dated October 2, 1871, appears the following:

"Under authority of the War Department, Forts Kearney and Sedgwick have been abandoned as military posts, being

no longer necessary. The troops, stores and all the material of any value, belonging to Fort Sedgwick were transferred to Sidney Barracks. Nothing was left at the old Fort but the walls of the adobe buildings. The stores and materials at Fort Kearney, not required by troops in camp south of it, have been transferred to Fort McPherson. The buildings at Fort Kearney are very old and of little value, and the lumber not worth moving. A vast amount of old iron has accumulated at this post, which may be of some value when the railroad south of the Platte is completed to this point."[45]

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16. Senate Executive Documents, 40th Cong., 1st Sess. No. 2, Serial 1308, pp. 2-4.
17. Ibid.

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19. Root, Frank E., and Connelley, William E., The Overland Stage to California, p. 65.

20. Carrington, Mrs. Margaret, op.cit., p. 264.

21. Post Returns, Fort Kearney, April, 1866.

22. Carrington, Mrs. Margaret, op.cit., p. 41.

23. Senate Executive Documents, 50th Cong., 1st Sess., No. 33, Serial 2504, p. 3.

24. Carrington, Mrs. Margaret, op.cit., pp. 42-44.

25. Carrington, Mrs. Frances Courtney, My Army Life, p. 17 (Mrs. Frances Courtney Carrington was Colonel Carrington's second wife. On this expedition, of which she writes, she was the wife of Lieutenant George W. Grummond, who was killed December 21, 1866, in the so-called Fetterman Massacre near Fort Phil Kearney, Wyo.)

26. Carrington, Mrs. Margaret, op.cit., p. 46.

27. Ibid., p. 47.

28. Ibid., p. 65.

29. Post Returns, Fort Kearney, October-December, 1866.

30. Ibid., December, 1866.

31. Ibid., January, 1867.

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34. Colonel William F. Cody, Autobiography, pp. 182-183.

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39. Paxson, op.cit., pp. 297-298.

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CHAPTER XI

"Dobytown"

No settlements were permitted upon the Fort Kearney military reservation, nor were persons allowed to camp there to any great extent, for at most seasons of the year all of the grass was required for the horses of the troops. Two small towns grew up, one at the eastern edge of the reservation, known as Hook's Station or Valley City, and one at the western edge, known as Kearney City or Dobytown. Valley City was eight miles from the fort, while Dobytown was but two miles.

Hook's Station derived its name from H. M. Hook, who operated a ranch there. His station for the overland stage was but a "swing" station where the horses on the stage were changed. He was also the postmaster at Valley City. The "city" contained three buildings, one of them the small store operated by Mr. Hook. It was a rather unimportant place but was popular with the weary freighters and passengers on the stage coaches, for there they got their first glimpse of the Platte River after traveling forty barren miles from the Little Blue Valley. It was sometimes referred to by the rather commonplace name of "Dogtown." Valley City never attracted the soldiers to any great extent, but its location at the junction of the

road from Nebraska City and the old military highway brought a limited freighting trade.

Dobytown consisted, during its early days, of some ten or twelve sod or adobe buildings. The people built their houses wherever they wished, without any regard for beauty, plot or streets. The settlers were mostly frontiersmen whose occupation was to trade with, or prey upon, those traveling over the Oregon Trail. All told, there was probably a more or less permanent population of some twenty-five persons. Most of these were men -- gamblers, saloon-keepers, and a few loafers without visible means of support. Several women of ill repute, preyed upon the emigrants and soldiers.

It was a favorite occupation of the loafers to sneak out at night, when the emigrants had put their herds out to graze, and run off their horses and cattle. The animals would be taken a short distance away, around a bend of the river, and hidden. The thieves would then report that the Indians had stolen the stock. This story seemed likely to the emigrants, for there was always a number of Pawnees around the fort to get their government allowances. Often the emigrants, not knowing the country, and sometimes not having a horse left to ride, would employ these same loafers to hunt for their stock. After a while the thieves would "find" the animals, bring them in, and receive

their reward. They did not fool all of the emigrants, but it was usually cheaper to pay the tribute than to be delayed in hunting stock in a strange country. Besides, there was "no law west of Leavenworth" at that time, except at the military posts.

Selling whiskey was the chief business of most of the residents of Dobytown. No license was necessary, and only a stock of whiskey and an upturned dry-goods box were needed. Such an establishment usually had plenty of business. from the travelers and the soldiers from the fort. Beer, too bulky to transport, was not used. The chief liquor, the more concentrated whiskey, sold at twenty-five cents a drink, or one dollar and a half to two dollars a quart. These fly-by-night dispensers came and went, and when business was no longer up to expectations at a place they moved on.

Several establishments boasted the name "saloon." These were usually built of sod, and consisted of a long room with a bar of rough boards running along the entire length of one side. A few square pine tables for gambling games covered with woolen blankets stood in front of the bar. Drinking and gambling went on night and day, but at night the tables were always full. English, French and Mexican were heard, together with much profanity. The men were always armed and sometimes a winning player would

celebrate by firing his pistol into the roof or into the sod walls, whereupon loose dirt would trickle down from the ceiling. The air of the saloon was usually blue from smoke of powder and tobacco. The smell mingled with that of whiskey made odors known only in a frontier whiskey dive.

Most of the whiskey sold at the Dobytown saloons was mean, sordid stuff. Much of it was "pilgrim whiskey," a concoction of equal parts of alcohol and water with molasses and a touch of red pepper. It was guaranteed to bring out all the bad qualities of the consumer. Strange as it may seem, quantities of champagne were sold and drunk. Persons who had struck it rich at the mines often met old friends at a Dobytown saloon and drank champagne with them. Entries in the ledger of a large outfitting establishment and store at Dobytown show numerous listings of "gold dust." These items usually appear in the cash accounts from May to November and indicate the mode of carrying funds most frequently used in those days.

Sometimes enemies, as well as friends, met at Dobytown, and often a pistol duel resulted. One writer remarks that in 1864 the cemetery was larger than the town. Another thought that "all the vile scum of creation was gathered together there. Four out of five buildings on Main Street were either saloons, gambling dens or brothels,

and they all seemed to be doing a good business. Almost every week from one to three men were shot to death. I thought that every denizen of that burg ought to be shot. The only doubt I have about anything was whether the devil could handle the bunch if they were all dumped into hell at the same time."

Many of the customers at the dives of Dobytown were the large number of ox and mule drivers going across the plains. They seldom failed to stop long enough to fill up on bad liquor and contribute to the profit of those running the disreputable places. The owners of freighting outfits were always glad to get out of Dobytown and always left there as soon as possible. Ox and mule drivers, and any guests with any money, would often be drugged with the vilest liquor and then robbed. Often they would be rendered unable to go on with their trains the next morning. The freighters would try to plan their drives so that they would not be forced to camp in the vicinity of such a disreputable place.

The soldiers quartered at Fort Kearney who drank whiskey, and most of them did, bought it at Dobytown. The post sutler was not permitted to sell liquor of any kind to the soldiers except by permission of the post commander, and this was but sparingly given. The government issued a whiskey ration during the Civil War, but this was small

in amount, usually consisting of one gill morning and evening. Some post commanders only issued it to fatigue details, as an added incentive to work. On June 29, 1865, the War Department ordered the whiskey ration discontinued altogether. When a company commander, whose outfit was stationed temporarily or permanently at Fort Kearney, Missed any of his men he usually found them A. W. O. L. at Dobytown.

Company F, Seventh Iowa Cavalry, arrived at Fort Kearney shortly after noon October 4, 1863. At the next formation three men were unaccounted for and Lieutenant Eugene F. Ware was ordered by Captain Nicholas J. O'Brien to round them up. He was unable to locate them anywhere that day, when someone suggested Dobytown. The next morning a man who lived at Dobytown was at the fort and, knowing the places in the town, offered to go with the lieutenant and help him find the men. On the way over the man exhibited his skill with a pistol by firing at the telegraph poles while his horse was going full speed. He hit eleven out of twelve. The man's name was (John) Talbot, and he was afterwards commissioned a lieutenant and was stationed at Fort Kearney, where he rose to the rank of major.

Merchants were not allowed to establish themselves upon the military reservation, and only the licensed sut-

ler was permitted to sell goods. The post sutler was approved for his post by the council of administration at the fort and was required to post a bond. He was at all times under the direct supervision of the post commander and was subject to such rules as might be prescribed by military authority. He did little business with the emigrants camped outside of the reservation. The travelers did most of their buying at Dobytown, where they could purchase equipment and find feed for their animals, and yet be near the protection of Fort Kearney.

The stores at Dobytown sold tobacco, guns, gunpowder, shot, flour, sugar and groceries of all kinds, as well as dry goods and clothing. One of the largest of these was the outfitting store operated by Anson Michel, later referred to as "the merchant prince of Dobytown."

Michel's store sold much merchandise to freighters and the stage lines, although there were many individual accounts. During the season of 1864 the Western Stage Line purchases amounting to $27.65, consisted largely of wrought iron nails at 25¢ per pound. On this bill rope is listed at 40¢ per pound and coffee at 75¢ a pound. During the same season the Overland Stage Line bought goods to the amount of $276.38. Flour was charged at $6.00 per sack and sugar was 50¢ a pound. Bacon was 20¢ per pound and crackers 30¢. Matches were 15¢ per box and

candles 40¢ a pound. A number of items have to do with blacksmithing, one item of twenty-five dollars being "for use of shop and coal." Coal cost sixty-five cents per bushel.

The largest customer listed during 1864 was the freighting firm of Holladay and Carlyle whose account for the year amounted to $616.25. $81.00 of this was for blacksmithing and $6.00 for wagon maker's bill. Mule nails were listed at $1.00 per pound and bolts were 10¢ each. Powder was $1.50 a can, shot 30¢ per pound and molasses was $25.00 per keg. Wagon grease was 50¢ a box and ox whips were $1.25 each. Table salt cost 10¢ a pound and tobacco $1.50. With the coming of colder weather such items as overshoes, at $5.00 per pair and socks at $1.50 appear. On November 18, "ranching 8 head of cattle, $25.00" is listed and on November 30 "one pistol by N. Smith, $35.00."

The account of Mrs. M. E. Moorland adds a feminine touch to the record of business. On September 20 she purchased three yards of delaine at 50¢ per yard and on October 14, one Balmoral skirt at $8.00 and two bunches of braid at 30¢ each. On the following day she is charged with fifteen and a half yards of calico at $7.75. November 26 lists fourteen yards of delaine at $1.00 per yard and on December 7 she bought, among other things, "6 Bunches of Braid, $1.80, 2 Bunches Whalebone, .50, thread, $1.30,

and 1 Bunch Pins, .25." On December 12 appear "1 Broom, .60, 9 Skeins Silk, .45 and 1 Doz. Corset Strings, .50."

Many officers and men purchased supplies at Dobytown, despite the fact that there was a sutler's store at the fort. In a number of instances the commanding officer at Fort Kearney ran an account at Michel's. During April and May, 1864, Major John S. Wood, the commandant at the fort, bought two twelve pound hams at 20¢ per pound, borrowed $25.00, and bought five gallons of whiskey at $6.00 a gallon. Lieutenant Twiggs, on April 18, bought on credit for $2.50 one pair of gloves for his wife. On May 24 he purchased, for his boy, a pair of shoes at $3.50 and on the same day a box of hair pins at 15¢ and a packet of buttons at 25¢. He paid his bill in full on July 10.

The cash account for the year of 1864 shows that business at the Michel store ran around $3,000 per month. June, with $5,388 and August with $5,078 were the best months of the year. Many items appear in the cash accounts, "paid for gold dust", a popular medium of exchange.

By 1865 the Western Stage Line had been absorbed by the Overland Stage Line, and disappeared as a customer at Dobytown. The Overland line continued to purchase goods at Dobytown and the account shows the effect of depreciated currency upon prices. Wrought iron nails had advanced from 25¢ to 30¢ a pound over the year before. Candles had

risen from 40¢ to 50¢ per pound and vinegar from $1.00 to $1.50 a gallon. On the account for this year appear two new items. Coal oil is listed at $3.00 a gallon and light glass (10" x 16") at 40¢ per pane.

Large freighting outfits camped at Dobytown for a few days continued to be Mr. Michel's best customers during 1865. Their accounts also show price increases over 1864. On September 7 Holladay and Carlyle are charged with two bills, one for $278.20 being designated "Wright's train," and the other for $127.55 for "Smith's train." These bills consist largely of items of ammunition, powder, lead, caps, etc., articles of men's clothing, and tobacco. There is evidence that some of the bullwhackers were writing home, for on Wright's bill appears "paper and envelops, .50" and on Smith's bill "writeing paper, .50, envelops, .25." Several pairs of pants are listed, the usual price being $15.00. Gloves are $5.00, boots $10.00, and socks are $1.00 per pair. Tobacco appears often, plug being $1.00, and smoking tobacco $1.25 cents a pound. Pipes are listed at 50¢ each. Whiskey is seldom listed, but one bottle is charged at $1.50, and two gallons at $6.00 per gallon. What whiskey was purchased was probably bought privately by the men and not charged to company accounts.

On September 6 H. M. Hook, proprietor of Hook's Station, bought a bill of $79.80 at Mr. Michel's store. He

purchased four bolts at 15¢ each and one hundred fifty-eight pounds of rope at 40¢ a pound. He also had two sickles mended, for which he paid $3.00 and had blacksmithing done to the extent of $10.00.

Officers from the fort continued to trade at Dobytown. Mr. Michel's ledger shows that on November 13 Lieutenant Potter bought one pair of lady's shoes for $5.00. Two days later he purchased two gallons of whiskey at $8.00 per gallon. Other items also appear indicating that the officers at Fort Kearney spent some of their time at Dobytown.

Not only did Mr. Michel handle groceries, clothing and outfitting goods, but he carried a line of drugs as well. On December 4, Doctor M. Bashore bought a bill of $79.93 which consisted largely of drugs. Included were ten bottles of bear's oil at 84¢ each, thirty-one boxes of McClintick's Pills at 15¢ per box, sixty bars of soap at prices varying from eight to thirty cents a bar, three ounces of quinine at $3.50 an ounce, and other items of ointments, liniment, pills and powders.

The cash account for 1865 shows that business was better than during the prededing year. While somewhat higher prices may account for some of the increase in dollar value, the ledger shows more transactions than in 1864. The best month was July, with a volumn of $5,019, but several

other summer months approached the $5,000 mark. Gold dust continued to figure in the accounts but these items do not appear until fall when the gold seekers returned to Dobytown. The first item is listed as of September 25, when twenty-eight dollars worth was taken in. During October more than five hundred dollars of "gold dust," were paid in this medium.

In the outfitting business it was almost necessary to run a blacksmith shop in connection with the store. Mr. Michel's shop did a very good business and many items "for blacksmithing" appear on his ledger. Not all of the stores, however, had shops in connection. Brown and Liddell ran a large outfitting store at Dobytown but had no blacksmith shop. Items appear on Michel's ledger for blacksmithing done for his competitors. Sometimes these items ran as high as $10.00 per month.

Board at Dobytown in 1866 cost $10.00 per week. Anson Michel and four of his men, Ed Parks, William Ray, John Bare and Warren Cooper, boarded with Mrs. M.E.Moorland. Mr. Michel employed his men at wages "and Board," numerous items in the ledger indicate payments made by him for board for himself and help. Mrs. Moorland's rate of $10.00 per week was very reasonable when it is considered that she had to pay at that time $10.50 for a sack of flour, 30¢ a pound for lard, 35¢ per pound for sugar, and other groceries in proportion.

Not only did the officers and men stationed at Fort Kearney do business at Dobytown, but the telegraph company as well was a customer at Michel's store. On January 11, the "Telegraph Office, Ft. Kearney" is charged with "2 files @ .50, $1.00." The bill was paid February 18, by L. R. Freeman.

Gold continued to be at a premium during 1866. On February 17, Mr. Michel received $1,663.03 from R. Hawke and Company for "73 oz. 18¢ Pwt. gold dust sold by them at $22.50 per oz." On September 29 the ledger shows that twenty-five dollars were paid for one double eagle. This would show gold to be at twenty-five per cent premium, although the first transaction would indicate a premium of but ten per cent.

As in the preceding seasons, a large part of Michel's trade came from freighters. On August 25 he sold a large bill of goods to Robert Wilson, who was passing through with a train. Prices were at post war levels, flour being $8.00 a sack and bacon 35¢ per pound. Bull whips were from $1.50 to $2.25 each and axle grease was $2.00 a can. Vinegar remained at $1.50 a gallon and molasses was $2.00 for a like quantity.

On September 18 three trains of Henry Carlyle and Company stopped at Dobytown. Six men from Austin's train, three men from Morgan Boon's train, and ten men from John

Carlyle's train bought goods at Michel's and had them charged to the account of their employers to be deducted from their wages. Nearly every man bought a pair of boots, varying in price from seven to twelve dollars, and a pair of pants at from five to seven dollars. Gloves costing from three to four and a half dollars were also purchased as was a large quantity of tobacco. Dobytown was always a good market for tobacco. The west bound trains were usually stocking up for the trip and the east bound were replenishing their exhausted supply.

Officers and men from Fort Kearney continued to frequent Mr. Michel's store. During April, 1866, Colonel Henry B. Carrington, the commanding officer at the fort, bought five yards of satinet at $3.00 per yard, one pair of gloves for $1.25, hair pins at 75¢, "patent" thread for 40¢, one and one half yards of black cambric at 35¢ per yard, and "one wooden pale, .75." The name of Sergeant John Holland also appears and Lieutenant John Talbot was a regular customer, his items being listed very frequently in the ledger.

The ledger for 1867 shows the effect of the railroad upon overland freighting. By the close of the prededing year the Union Pacific had built more than one hundred miles west of Kearney. No longer do the large accounts of the well known freighters appear on the Michel ledger. Only an occasional small account under an almost unknown name serves to

recall this lucrative business.

On February 22 Dr. W. H. Bradley, Surgeon at Fort Kearney, bought one bunch of braid at 30¢, and one pair of gloves for $4.00. Two pint bottles of champagne at $2.00 per pint were possibly needed by the doctor in the celebration of Washington's birthday. On April 2 Major John Talbot was charged with "one small line, .50, 3" shot, .25, .75, 1 pair gaiters, 4.00 and 106" corn, 3½, $3.70," and on August 9, Dr. Bradley bought twenty-two pounds of ham at 30¢ per pound, two pounds of crackers at 35¢ a pound, and elastic for ten cents.

Lieutenant W. L. Foulk, commander at Fort Kearney from May 16, 1867 to October 4, 1867, is charged with blacksmithing at $42.50 and five cans of sugar lemon at $3.75. On September 6, he is charged with $12.00 for blacksmithing and nine one-half pound wedges at $2.37. The same day Captain Wyman bought a pair of pants for $12.00.

On September 24 Lieutenant Foulk purchased a bill of goods amounting to $35.50. This bill consisted of "27 cans sugar lemon, $8.00, whip stock, .50, whip lash, .50, 3 bots. jelly, 2.25, 1 can tomatoes, 65, 1 bot pickles, 1.50, 2 cans cranberries sauce, 2.00, 6 cans peaches, 3.60, 12 cans tomatoes, 5.50, 2 bot. Jelly, 1.50, 2 bot. chowchow, 2.50, 1 bot pickles, 1.50, 1 bot catsup, 1.00, 10 lbs. rock sugar, 3.50."

Major Alexander J. Dallas, commander at Fort Kearney from October 4, 1867 to May 20, 1868, purchased two bottles of wine for $2.50, and two bottles of whiskey at $3.00. On December 23 one bottle of champagne, among other items, was charged to him.

By 1868 prices of items sold at Dobytown began to show some reduction. It will be remembered that on November 24, 1856, Captain Wharton and the officers and men stationed at Fort Kearney had petitioned Congress to extend the provisions of the act granting extra pay to the commands at the western ports to Fort Kearney, since the heavy transportation costs made the price of goods abnormally high. This was done, and some relief was afforded the men at Fort Kearney. Now that the railroad had come, freight rates were less, and this reduction reflected itself in prices charged at Dobytown stores. In 1865 coal oil sold at $3.00 a gallon; in January, 1868, the price was but $2.00 a gallon. Sugar which had sold at from forty to fifty cents per pound was then 25¢. Other items showed similar reductions.

During 1868 business at Michel's continued much the same as in the preceding years. Since the ledger shows only the charge accounts, no record is available of the cash purchases. Doctor Bradley continued to be a heavy purchaser of various items -- one bottle of gin, one bottle of sherry wine and six quarts of whiskey. His liquor bill that month was

fifteen dollars.

Other officers' names on the ledger were Major Talbot, Lieutenant Keyes, Lieutenant Griffith, Sergeant Holland and Sergeant Coady. On August 1 the name of Colonel Dunbar R. Ransom, commander at Fort Kearney from May 20 to October 16, 1868, appears. On that day he bought six pounds of cheese at 50¢ a pound, one coffee mill at $1.00, and two bottles of whiskey for $3.50. His name does not again appear except that on September 21, less than a month before his departure from Fort Kearney, he paid Mr. Michel $1.00 on account.

By 1869 the garrison at the fort had been greatly reduced and the small numbers had an effect upon the Dobytown business. The names of Sergeants Holland and Coady, Surgeon Bradley, Major Talbot, Lieutenant McCauley and Captain Fenton appear. As before, a considerable part of their purchases consisted of items which could not be secured from the post sutler. Captain Reuben N. Fenton was the commanding officer at Fort Kearney from November 11, 1868 to June 15, 1869. In April he bought three quarts of whiskey for $6.00 and "drinks" at $2.00. "Sundries" accounted for seven dollars of his fifteen dollar purchases. On May 22 he was charged with a hat at $2.00 and a pair of boots at $10.00.

In August Mr. Michel added a billard table to his store and from that time on "billiards" appear as a charge in the ledger. The price per game was twenty-five cents and

numerous "drinks" are also listed with the charge for the three ball game.

The last commander at Fort Kearney, Captain Edwin Pollock, appears but once on the books of the Michel store. On September 29, 1860, he purchased one half gallon of whiskey at $4.00. When the fort was abandoned in May, 1871, Lieutenant Edward Hoppy was left in charge of the property. He, too, traded at Dobytown. The lieutenant evidently set up housekeeping when he arrived at the fort. On September 21, 1871 he purchased "coffee pot, .75, 1 Doz. Eggs, .40, 2 Wash tubbs, 2.50, 2 cups and saucer, .50, 1 Wash Board, .50, Queensware, 4.50, 4 flat iron 6.00," and on October 4, "Roling pin, .50, Potatoes masher, .50 and Dipper, .30," and on succeeding dates a number of other household items.

With the abandonment, May 17, 1871, of Fort Kearney, Dobytown could not remain much longer. The day of the freighter was passed, no longer did the huge trains stop at Dobytown for repairs and supplies. The hundreds of soldiers with wages to spend came no more to the edge of the reservation, where they could be out of military bounds and could purchase whiskey and gamble. The building of the Union Pacific Railroad north of the Platte River during the summer of 1866 and the completion, eight years later, of the Burlington and Missouri River Railroad to a junction with the Union Pacific two miles west of Dobytown but on the north

side of the river left Dobytown, south of the Platte, hopelessly isolated. A town, Kearney Junction, grew up at the junction of the two railroads, and business centered there. Kearney Junction is today the city of Kearney, with some 10,000 inhabitants. The site of Dobytown is a farmer's field.

The "merchant prince of Dobytown," Mr. Anson Michel, whose ledgers give an insight into the business of Dobytown, did not foresee the change about to come. Shrewder men of the dying village unloaded their property upon him at high prices. Mr. Michel is said to have paid as high as $6,000 for a lot with but a double log billiard hall upon it, and bought other properties in proportion. His wealth, honesty earned in the mercantile business, vanished with the last vestige of Dobytown.

For many years a large cottonwood tree stood in the middle of State Highway No. 10, at the point which once marked the western boundary of the military reservation and the center of old Dobytown. It was a beautiful tree and traffic passed around it. Persons in the neighborhood were sentimental about the old tree, it was an historic landmark, and no ax had ever touched it. But in 1929 progress, and the state highway engineers, overruled sentiment and the old tree was cut down to make way for a better and wider highway. At its base, buried a few feet under the ground, workmen found two cavalry swords. Could they speak, their tales might rekindle old frontier campfires.

References

This chapter was constructed from the following sources:

a. The Michel Ledgers.

These ledgers, two in number, cover the period from 1864 to 1872. The first, from 1864 to 1866, was loaned to the writer by John Lowe, an historically minded banker of Kearney, Neb. The second, 1866 to 1872, was loaned by Associate Professor Jennie M. Conrad, of the State Teachers College at Kearney. The names of purchasers, the amount bought, and the price paid are listed in the day to day accounts.

b. The Fort Kearney Post Returns.

Monthly reports or returns were filed by the commanding officer of the post with the Adjutant General of the Army. The files of these returns are very complete and were examined at Washington by permission of the Secretary- of War.

c. Five personal accounts by persons actually at Dobytown.

Bratt, John, Trails of Yesterday.

Crawford, L.F. Rekindling Camp Fires.

Kirkpatrick, E.A., Guard at Old Fort Kearney, in Nebraska State Journal, April 15, 1928.

Root, Frank A., and Connelley, William E., The Overland Stage to California.

Ware, Eugene F., The Indian War of 1864.

Bratt was a bullwhacker whose train camped at Dobytown in 1867. Crawford, Kirkpatrick and Ware were soldiers who saw Dobytown buring the sixties. Root was an overland stage conductor who passed through Dobytown semi-weekly from 1863 to 1866.

CHAPTER XII

Fort Kearney Itself

Prior to the Civil War military posts, established upon tracts of the public domain, were placed upon reservations ten miles square. This was done pursuant to an order of William L. Marcy, Secretary of War, dated January 29, 1848, and which required that, "The commanding officer of the military stations established on the route to Oregon will make a reserve of ten miles square around the same, and cause it to be surveyed and divided off into suitable portions, of which the boundaries will be clearly marked by natural or other objects, and indicated by numbers on a map to be prepared for the convenience of future reference".[1] On January 18, 1849, Secretary Marcy declared such a reservation at Fort Kearney.[2]

Extending along both sides of the Platte River, the reservation included the intervening islands of the river to the western edge of its boundary, and all of the islands to the east for a distance of six miles beyond the eastern boundary. Wood was available on the islands, hence the reserving of all of them for a distance of sixteen miles. Parts of four townships were included in the reservation. Two thirds of the tract was located south of the Platte River in what is now Kearney County, Nebraska. The remainder, including the islands, was in what is now Buffalo County, Nebraska.

The fort itself was situated on the southwest quarter

of the southwest quarter of Section 22, Township 8 North, Range 15 West. It was eight miles in from the eastern boundary of the reservation, two miles (160 chains by survey) from the western boundary, and midway between the northern and southern limits of the reserve.[3]

Construction work was begun on Fort Kearney under the direction of Lieutenant Daniel P. Woodbury, of the Corps of Engineers, as soon as troops were stationed there in June 1848. By December of that year two frame buildings of native cottonwood lumber, for quarters for te troops, were completed. Three adobe buildings, a storehouse and two temporary stables, each accomodating forty-eight horses, were also finished.[4]

Diaries of emigrants who saw the fort in 1849 agree remarkably in their descriptions of the post. A. Delano, who was there on May 23 described it as being a cluster of low, one story, adobe buildings. He thought that these were sufficient for two companies of soldiers. Mention is also made of preparations which were being made to erect a horse-power saw mill, and to enclose the barracks within a wall.[5] John Page, who saw the fort the next day relates passing it at noon. "it is situated opposite the head of grand island, thear is nothing hear now but a few mud huts but thear are going to build a regular fort. . . ."[6]

Lieutenant Woodbury began work on the hospital building late in May. plans were also drawn for the erection of additional quarters for officers and men.[7] Major Osborn Cross of

the Quratermaster Corps inspected the fort on May 31, 1849. He reported that the site for the post was "not a very pleasing one" and had nothing to recommend it in the way of beauty. He commented on the scarcity of wood, both for lumber and fuel, and also upon the general appearance of the surrounding region.[8] Captain David De Wolf, who was at the fort two weeks later, mentions the novel appearance of the sod buildings. These he describes as being made of blocks of turf about three feet square laid up in coarses, grass side down. The roofs were built of the same material and made waterproof by covering them with brush. He thought that the hospital would be a good building when finished.[9]

Lieutenant Woodbury prepared a plan of the fort during the summer of 1849. The buildings of the post faced the parade ground six hundred by six hundred forty feet. This rectangle was surrounded by the hospital at the southwest corner, officers quarters at the south, barracks for the emlisted men at the east, and the stables at the north. Several proposed buildings were also sketched on the plan.[10]

The diaries of George W. Read, Lodisa Frizzell and L. D. Randall describe the post in 1850. The descriptions agree perfectly, even to the smaller details. Read mentions the high price of goods at the sutler's store.[11] Mrs. Frizzell was particularly interested in seeing a house again.[12] Randall was impressed by the scarcity of wood.[13] All describe

the post as consisting of three large and three small frame buildings, one of the smaller ones being a store; of one large sod house, used for a store house, and a number of smaller ones. The walls of the sod houses are described as being three feet thick.

No further construction work was done at the fort until the summer of 1860 when additional officers' and soldiers' quarters were built. During 1859 three hundred fifty men were quartered at Fort Kearney. It was necessary for most of the men to be housed in tents and this was difficult in the winter. On April 14, 1860, Colonel Charles A. May, the commanding officer, wrote to the War Department concerning the erection of additional buildings at the fort.[14] The returns about this time show that a large force of civilian sawyers, carpenters and teamsters were employed at the post.

By 1863 the appearance of the fort had not greatly changed. Frank Root, conductor on the Overland Stage Line, was at the fort semi-weekly. "Fort Kearney, in 1863," he writes, "was a rather lonesome but a prominent point. It was a place of a dozen or more buildings, including the barracks . . . It was in the sixties, as it had for several years before been, an important military post . . . It was a grand sight, after travelling 150 miles without seeing a settlement of more than two or three houses, to gaze upon the old post, uninviting as it was, and see the few scattered

buildings, a nice growth of shade trees, the cavalry mounted upon their steeds, the cannon planted within the hollow square, and the stars and stripes proudly waving in the breeze above the garrison."[15]

On October 4, 1863, Lieutenant Eugene F. Ware, of the Seventh Iowa Cavalry, saw Fort Kearney for the first time. It was "a little old rusty frontier cantonment" whose buildings were principally built of native lumber. Since the regulars had left it the post had run down in "style and appearance". The parade ground was small and was surrounded by a few straggling trees, the survivors of a much larger number which had been set out several years before. "On the south side of the square", writes Ware, "was the largest building, and on the second floor of it was a large room which seemed as if it had at one time been used as a sort of officers' club. There was a large brick fireplace, and above it the masonry of the chimney had been plastered with a hard, smooth finish. Upon this white surface on the breast of the chimney were written a large number of names." Ware observed the names of many officers whose distinguished service in the Civil War made them well known. Among these names was that of Lieutenant R. E. Lee.[16]

At this time Fort Kearney was used as a supply depot for many of the posts farther west. Also, according to law, the commissary was empowered to sell provisions, at the

government cost price, which was about a third of the ordinary price, to indigent and hungry persons whose requisitions were approved by the post commander. The storehouse at the fort, therefore, always had on hand a large quantity of supplies of one kind and another, for there were a great many people who, by reason of improvidence or accident, ran out of supplies. Even though the commanders were very careful about approving orders, there were large numbers of persons whose requests seemed just, so the sales were constant. The amount of supplies needed to be large, also, to provide for any emergency that might arise at Fort Kearney or at some other post. In addition the post commander was instructed to use his best judgment about gratuitously feeding the Indians, and there were always some around to take advantage of the "White Fathers" generosity.

There was also at the post a large quartermaster depot which had on hand almost every kind of tool or utensil used on the frontier. There were whip-saws, axes, anvils, blacksmith and carpenter tools, shovels, spades, plows, and almost everything that would be needed at a frontier post.[17]

Practically no cultivation was carried on at Fort Kearney. Some bluegrass had been sown about the post for pasturage and it had grown well. During the first years of occupation attempts had been made to raise some vegetables for use at the post but this had not been very successful.

In fact in March 1854, orders had been received by Captain Wharton "directing the farm culture to be discontinued".[18] Ware found that a little gardening was being attempted a short distance from the fort. Here a small enclosure had been made of posts and brush, and a well dug for irrigation purposes. Stable manure had been spaded under and soldiers from the post had been put to work on fatigue duty, from time to time, in the garden. The result was so feeble, however, that it scarcely justified the effort.

After the Indian disturbances of August, 1864, Colonel Robert R. Livingston, commanding officer of the First Nebraska Cavalry and of the sub-military district of Nebraska, used Fort Kearney as headquarters. He did not believe that the fort was sufficiently protected to withstand any considerable Indian attack, so in the fall ordered certain improvements made to increase the strength of the post. Principal among these was the erection, to the east of the rectangle around which the buildings stood, of a stockade. Earthworks were thrown up some three or four feet high and a stockade of split ash logs, set in the ground and extending up about seven feet, was built. This stockade was some two hundred feet square, large enough to shelter the entire garrison. Additional precautions were taken to protect the ammunition magazine to the north of the barracks. A cannon was mounted in front of it and a guard kept there day and night.[19]

Fortunately Fort Kearney was never attacked by the Indians.

From time to time post surgeons were required to report concerning the sanitary and health conditions at their posts. In December 1869, Acting Assistant Surgeon W. H. Bradley, stationed at Fort Kearney, drafted a very complete report of the post. It furnishes one of the best official descriptions of the fort just prior to its abandonment. Dr. Bradley begins his report with a statement of the location of Fort Kearney in terms of latitude and longitude, and relation to the Platte River. He describes the environs of the post, mentioning the range of hills to the north and south. "The whole country is prairie, and is supposed to be, with little exception arable, capable of yielding good crops of wheat, corn, oats, potatoes, fruit, and all kinds of vegetables that grow in the same latitude in the Eastern states".[20]

A record of temperature was kept from July 1 to December 31, 1868, during which time the average was fifty-two degrees, and the average hygrometer, fifty-one degrees. During the summer and fall high winds, storms, heavy rain showers, and hurricanes, were rpported as being frequent, but during the winter snow did not remain any length of time.

The report gave the location of the various buildings and mention that the company quarters were very well lighted but poorly ventilated. The dormitories had an air space of two hundred fifty cubic feet per man, were furnished with

double bunks, and the men slept on bedsacks filled with hay. The Quarters for the married soldiers were in log and adobe buildings, in a very dilapidated condition. The commanding officer's quarters consisted of a story-and-a-half frame building, containing six rooms, each twenty feet square, a hall, kitchen, and a large porch in front and rear. The building, though built in "old fashion style," was comfortable. It faced the parade ground and had a garden at the sides and rear. Quarters for the other officers were likewise comfortable, but not so commodious. These quarters were located in an old style two-story-and-a-half frame building containing twelve rooms, halls and kitchens. In the line on the west of the officers' quarters was a three room cottage originally intended for the use of the post chaplain. This cottage was twenty-two by forty feet, with rooms fifteen feet square.

Four office buildings were located west of the parade ground[21] and were similar to the company buildings, except smaller. The storehouses to the north were frame buildings with weatherboarded sides. They were spacious and in good condition. The guard house resembled the company quarters, but smaller. It contained two rooms, each twenty by twenty feet, one for the prisoners and the other for the guard detail. It had a front porch, was well lighted and suitable for the purpose for which it was used.

The hospital, built in 1849, stood at the southwest corner of the parade ground. It was a one story structure, consisting of three ward rooms, each twenty-five by thirty feet, a dispensary and office, a kitchen, and a laundry. The building was warmed by stoves, was well lighted but poorly ventilated. There were no bath rooms and every thing was old and dilapidated, ill suited for hospital use. Dr. Bradley thought that a new hospital was "much needed".

The post bakery was located in a large adobe building with a dirt roof. It had a brick oven of sufficient capacity to bake all the bread needed for post. The ammunition magazine, first located at the southeast corner of the parade ground, but later moved to the north of the square, was conoidal in form, covered with several feet of earth, and in good condition.

An ice-house was located about three hundred yards southwest of the parade ground. It was built entirely above ground, was of frame construction, twenty by forty feet, and was old and dilapidated. There were several other small buildings about the square, one being used as a billiard room and another as a school-house. The stables to the north were built of sod, were in poor condition and badly in need of repair. Water for the garrison was obtained from wells, twelve to twenty feet deep. The animals of the post were watered in the Platte River.

Supplies for the post, in 1869, were furnished from the assistant commissary of susistence at Omaha, Nebraska. There was a daily mail from Kearney's Station, on the Union Pacific Railroad. Dr. Bradley estimated the population of the scattered settlements south of the Platte river to be about 1,500. Agriculture was the general occupation of the settlers. The principal trading towns were Kearney, Wood River, and Grand Island.

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CHAPTER XIII

Garrison Life

The daily life of the officers and men at Fort Kearney was, in most respects, similar to that at other frontier posts. At best, a military post on the plains was an isolated place, suggesting "very forcibly, the peculiar inspiration of a ship at sea; isolation within and desolation without."[1] The fort had the same rigid enforcement of discipline, always the supreme authority of the commanding officer, as upon a ship far from port. But unlike officers and men aboard ship, the garrison at a military post sometimes received brief furloughs and these tended to break the monotony of an otherwise uneventful life. The officers and men condemned to the isolation of duty on the plains deserved the sympathy of those who enjoyed comfortable and secure homes away from the frontier.

At the frontier posts work of construction had to be done by the troops. In many instances no civilians were available, and had they been, no funds were allowed for their employment. At Fort Kearney all of the first work was done by troops, no civilians being employed for several years.

The Missouri Volunteers, who first garrisoned Fort Kearney, had been enlisted for service in the Mexican War. Instead of being sent to the front, however, they were assigned to establish the new military posts on the route to Oregon. This duty was distasteful to them, and before they

had left Fort Kearney on the Missouri, several had deserted.[2] Their services as mechanics and artisans at Fort Kearney on the Platte were not highly regarded by the engineer officer in charge. He soon complained that they could not get the work done in a reasonable time. While he had four hundred fifty men to draw from he did not believe that he could accomplish much, for, he reported, "it is particularly hard to obtain work from mounted troops . . . their horses require much of their time and care".[3]

Immediately upon arrival at the site of the new post on the Platte River, Lieutenant Woodbury put twenty men at moulding and burning bricks, sixty at moulding adobes, twenty-five at work as carpenters, twenty at building a sod stable, and fifty at hauling and laying adobes. The work of these one hundred and seventy-five men, trifling before news of the treaty, became less every day afterwards. They had enlisted as soldiers, not as laborers.[4]

Fuel for the fort was secured from the islands in the Platte River which were a part of the military reservation. Details of soldiers were sent to the islands to cut wood and haul it to the post. Fresh vegetables were always difficult to secure at frontier forts, they were very bulky and thus expensive to transport. The absolute necessity for vegetables in the diet, caused post commanders to do their utmost to secure a supply. At some posts a gardener was appointed from

the enlisted men and plots of ground set aside as gardens. Seed was purchased from company funds and men on fatigue were detailed for garden duty. Vegetables thus produced furnished variety to the mess.[5] At Fort Kearney Captain Charles F. Ruff attempted a company garden in the spring of 1849.[6] This was not very successful and further attempts were abandoned a few years later. In addition to fuel and garden projects, the men at the post were often sent out on hay cutting details. Posts garrisoned by mounted troops, as was Fort Kearney, required a large tonnage of hay for the animals. Much of the time of the men was required for this work and commanding officers complained that time thus spent could be put to better use in drill or other more soldierly activities. Colonel Charles A. May, several times sought permission to have the hay cut by contract, but was refused. A letter from Departmental Headquarters declined "to grant authority to get the hay cut by contract".[7] So great was the objection of the troops to ax and sickle soldiering that Congress, in 1866, provided extra pay of twenty cents per day to men employed in fatigue duty for periods of ten consecutive days or more.[8]

Other means were also used to encourage the men to work at tasks not strictly military. The warehouse at Fort Kearney held a quantity of whiskey in storage. In 1864, when Fort Cottonwood at the forks of the Platte River, was being built,

Captain Nicholas J. O'Brien, in command there, sent an officer to Fort Kearney to get a supply of whiskey for rations. This officer drew seven barrels of corn whiskey, which he took to Fort Cottonwood. Builders and other hard workers not strictly military, were given a gill of whiskey in the morning and another gill in the evening, provided they did not shirk work during the day. The result was that "the men all seemed inspired, and they all wanted to work, and those who did work, as a rule, did well".[9] Similar means were used at Fort Kearney until July, 1865, when the War Department ordered the whiskey ration discontinued.[10]

The troops at Fort Kearney were called upon to perform considerable escort duty. Escort detail was usually distasteful to the men. Especially was this true at Fort Kearney where so many demands were made for protection. The post returns show numerous entries regarding these escorts. The Paymaster, who stopped at each post bi-monthly, was entitled to an escort of "two corporals and ten privates." Others, such as Indian agents and officers passing over the trail, were given escort numbered according to rank, or gravity of Indian danger. The strength of the escort was determined by the commanding officer at the post. The escort of freighters and stages was disliked by the men for it meant the slow, tedious, and dusty progress of the ox-trains. Every move of the train depended upon the supply of forage, and stops were

made according to the availability of grass. The rest of the troopers acting as escort was broken by the morning and afternoon drives, and the night halt required constant vigilance by the guard escort charged with the safety of the train. Constant lookout had to be kept for the Indians, and especially was this true in the region about Fort Kearney. The horses of a wagon-train, and there were always several with the ox-trains which were used for herding, etc., were highly prized by the Indians. Every effort would be made by them to swoop down upon the train and run off the horses.

The escort of the stages was not so unpleasant to the men. The movement was much more rapid and stops on account of grass were unnecessary. While the contact of the soldiers with the passengers was very casual, it was not so objectionable as the closer contact into which they were forced with the bullwhackers. The entries on the post returns for 1864 and 1865 indicate that a very large number of men from Fort Kearney were, because of the grave Indian danger, detailed for escort duty of this kind.

Daily routine at Fort Kearney began at four thirty A.M., when the sergeant of the guard went along the company barracks and awakened the cooks and kitchen police. All was quiet then until six o'clock when the buglers sounded first call for reveille. At this call all was activity in the barracks. The men were out of bed in an instant and into their clothes.

Down the steps and out of the barracks door, they lined up in formation upon the parade ground. At 6:10 reveille was sounded, the men standing at attention as the flag burst from the top of the staff. Immediately followed roll call, each corporal reported his squad "present or accounted for"; the first sergeant then reported the roll call to the commissioned officer taking the roll. The men were then dismissed and the fifteen minutes before breakfast was spent by them in washing themselves and making their beds. At six thirty the buglers blew mess call, whereupon the men lined up in the mess-hall to receive their breakfast of bacon, hard bread and coffee.

After breakfast came stable call, when the mounted troops went to the stables to water and curry their horses. A few minutes later sick call was sounded and all men on sick report in the companies were sent to the post hospital to be examined by the surgeon. If the condition warranted it the surgeon ordered the ailing soldier to the hospital for treatment. In case of minor ailment, the proper medicine was given and the soldier ordered to light duty. Cases of malingering were usually treated with a stiff dose of castor oil or other equally distasteful remedy, and the man ordered back to duty. One or two trips of this sort effected a remarkable cure for playing sick.

At eight o'clock fatigue call was sounded and details

of men from each company began the work of "policing up" the grounds, - the parade ground, walks, roads, quarters, and post in general. Shortly after fatigue guard mount and drill calls were sounded. Upon the former the guard details marched to the guard-house north of the flagstaff and at the north end of the parade groung, for guard mount. Here the sergeant-major dressed the "ranks," counted off the guard, and reported to the officer of the day. The guard was then inspected by the officer. The detail was ordered to attention and the officer started down the line stopping in front of each man. After looking the man over from head to foot, to see that every button shone, that shoes were brightly polished, and uniform carefully brushed, he took the soldier's rifle and scrutinized it most carefully. Woe to the man whose rifle left the slightest mark upon the officer's white gloves! After each man had been examined in turn the best looking soldier was selected to act, on that guard tour, as orderly to the commanding officer. This was, and is yet, a much sought for honor, because the fortunate one selected got an unbroken nights rest, while his comrades did two on and two off for twenty-four hours. After the orderly had been selected the new guard was divided into two details, the first of which went on duty at once and relieved the last detail of the old guard at each guard post.

The remainder of the troops were then taken to the

parade ground or other convenient place for drill. The newer infantry recruits were drilled in the school of the soldier, the older men in squad or company formation. The cavalry or artillery companies were wheeled through their respective drills. These usually lasted until eleven or eleven thirty, when the men were brought in to the barracks and dismissed. Mess call was sounded at noon for dinner. Until two o'clock the men were free, and this time was spent in various ways - some read, others played cards or other games, while a few perhaps wrote letters home. Drill call sounded at two o' clock, the afternoon drill lasting about an hour. At five thirty came assembly call, at which time every officer and man appeared in full dress uniform for dress parade. A few minutes later dress parade was sounded and the evening formation held. If a band were present the national anthem was played as the men stood at attention and the flag was lowered. There was not always a band present at Fort Kearney, so often instead the buglers blew "To the Colors", as the flag was lowered.

Mess call followed shortly after dress parade, supper being served at six or thereabouts. There were no ordinary duties after supper, the evenings being spent by the men as they chose. Tattoo was sounded at nine, call to quarters, at ten forty, and taps, at eleven.

The routine varied as the days became shorter in winter,

and drill was not held on days of bad weather, winter or summer. Saturday was usually a day for more careful policing of grounds and barracks, and time was given the men to get ready for the weekly inspection, which was then held on Sunday. The schedule also varied somewhat under different commanding officers, but was substantially as outlined above.

During the Civil War the daily life at Fort Kearney was somewhat different than when the post was garrisoned by regulars. The volunteer troops and their officers were on but temporary service and did not feel quite the same about adhering strictly to regulations as did the regulars. Some of the commanders were especially lax about drill. When Colonel Livingston and the First Nebraska Cavalry were at the post during 1864 and 1865 drill was held regularly each morning. The commanding officer gave the order, "By companies, right wheel into line, March". The men slowly wheeled and when aligned the command was given, "Draw saber, present saber". The entire drill occupied about twelve seconds. At dress parade in the afternoon Colonel Livingston himself was in command. This formation lasted "just three seconds".[13]

The colonel was a rigid and cruel disciplinarian. He is described as having an eye like an eagle, and being able "to look right through" a guilty culprit. His voice was like a trumpet, and struck fear into the hearts of his men. A

soldier who served under him at Fort Kearney, writes, "I saw five men strung up against the stockade by their thumbs at one time. 'Necessary discipline', they called it. I saw Polk Bennett handcuffed, he shouting and cursing the officers; they told him to shut up, and as he would not they forced a stick crossways in his mouth and fastened it with a string around the back of his head. He was bleeding badly but was not making any noise. That too, they called 'necessary discipline'. Necessary discipline made a very unpleasant impression on one farmer boy."[14]

Immediately following the Civil War, and while volunteer regiments were still stationed at Fort Kearney, discipline at the fort fell down miserably. The post had always had some desertions, but after the war the number increased to proportions hitherto unheard of. The war was over, the men wanted to get home, and many did not await the formality of being mustered out. On July 10, 1865, five enlisted men deserted from the First Nebraska Veteran Cavalry, and, during August, fourteen deserted from that organization and from the Sixth U. S. Volunteer Infantry. But by September the epidemic had become virulent. During that month the post lost fifty-nine men by desertion, eleven men leaving in one day. This continued until the volunteer troops were withdrawn. On December 3 one first lieutenant deserted from the Twelfth Missouri Cavalry.

Hunting was a diversion at frontier posts which had a tendency to break up the monotony of duty. This was a pastime of both officers and men and was encouraged by commanding officers to provide relief from daily routine. The region about Fort Kearney abounded in game. There were large herds of buffalo near and antelope and smaller game were plentiful.

In the fall of 1863 Major John S. Wood, Captain Nicholas J. O'Brien, and Lieutenant Eugene F. Ware, with a scout, went south of Fort Kearney to hunt buffalo. They were armed with Colt's revolvers, 44 caliber and rode horses not used to buffalo hunting. During the afternoon they killed several buffaloes but being unable to bring them back to the post, they cut out the tongues and returned with them to bear witness of their luck. The carcasses were left to the wolves always near the edges of a buffalo herd.[15]

The life of the officers at Fort Kearney, in common with other fromtier posts, was quite different from that of the enlisted men. A very wide and deep chasm of rank separated the commissioned personnel from the enlisted. The officers were, for the most part, married and lived with their families in the officers quarters. Very few of the enlisted men were married, those who were had married after entering the service, for only single men were, as a rule, enlisted. The officers and their families moved in their own social circle, and at Fort Kearney, with often but a few officers on

duty, this circle was quite small and select. The chaplain was classified as an officer and, for social purposes at least, the post sutler was also. This person was a sort of quasi-officer, army regulations rating him with the rank of cadet,[16] a kind of half way point between sergeant and ensign. He was not, however, carried on the muster roll in any form, for he did not receive pay from the Government.

During the Civil War, especially, life at Fort Kearney was influenced by the officer personnel on duty. Commissions in the volunteer service were issued by the governor of the state in which the organization originated. When the regiments were mustered into Federal service, these commissions were honored by the Adjutant-General of the Army, without examination into the fitness of the individuals holding them. Much political pressure was brought to bear in the securing of these appointments. This resulted in a commissioned staff of aneven quality.

Constant quarreling and bickering went on among the officers at Fort Kearney, a condition not unlike that at any post where volunteer troops were stationed. The superior officers tried to remove undesirable inferior officers by transfer or by court-martial. Junior officers were constantly attempting to oust their superiors by political chicanery, or to bring them into discredit in any way possible. This condition had an undesirable effect upon the morale of

the whole post and caused constant turmoil.

During April, 1864, a vacancy in the rank of second lieutenant occurred in Company A, Seventh Iowa Cavalry, stationed at Fort Kearney. Immediately the other officers of the regiment started working in behalf of friends whom they wished appointed. One of the first lieutenants of another company of the Seventh was a friend of Tom Potter, First Sergeant of Company A. This lieutenant had been promoted from the rank of sergeant in his company as had his captain, which probably accounted for his friendship with the top sergeant of Company A. This officer, writing from notes more than forty years later, relates the incident. "Tom Potter and I had been friends, and I had been working to help him get into the vacancy, and during April I was very much grieved to hear that he had failed in being commissioned. This Tom Potter finally became an officer of the Company. Our relations were exceedingly friendly, but at that time he had no money, few friends, and no relations. There was nobody to help him. He was alone in the world and promotions did not always go upon their merits. Our friendship lasted for many years, until his death. He afterwards became president of the Union Pacific Railroad at Fifty Thousand Dollars a year, and worked himself to death. But in the very height of his powers in the army, he was unable to become Second Lieutenant, owing to the

petty little rivalries and dishonest instincts of his superiors, until long afterwards."[17]

Target practice, as well as drill, had been neglected at Fort Kearney during the war. With the coming of regular troops in 1866, however, orders required that more attention be paid to this important military duty. While the volunteers were on duty at the post the only target practice was a perfunctory one by the guard. When a new detail went on in the morning the men were ordered to load their pieces so that all rifles of the guard would be effective in case of emergency. Upon being relieved each man discharged his piece, under the direction of a non-commissioned, or occasionally a commissioned officer, at a target set up at varying distances. A record was kept of the best shot, and if within certain limits, the man making it was credited with a tour of guard duty. This practice by the guards was continued after the war.

In August, 1867, a test was ordered of the Springfield Fifty-eight caliber Rifle Musket and the Allen Fifty caliber Breech Loading Musket. Breech loaders had come into use just at the close of the war, and no model had yet been adopted by the army. The garrison at this time was the smallest in the history of the post, consisting of an aggregate of but forty men. Of the ninety-three cartridges expended from each model, "none failed to explode".[18]

For a similar test in December 1869, the return relates that, "Target practice was had three times during the month for the purpose of testing the relative merit of the new Springfield and Remington breech loading muskets. No satisfactory opinion yet formed." There were thirty-six men present at each drill, and the number of shots fired was five hundred seventy-six. One of the purposes was to test the relative merits of the ammunition manufactured by private companies and that made by the Ordnance Department. The report showed that none of the privately manufactured cartridges failed to explode, but that one half of one per cent of those manufactured by the army failed.[19]

After this time drill and target practice were again permitted to fall into disuse. The later returns contain such items as "target practice had been held, the command having been drilled twice daily, weather permitting," or no mention at all is made of such duties being performed. The garrison, during those last years, was small, averaging but fifty men. Their time was taken up largely by routine duty at the post.

Life at Fort Kearney was not so monotonous after the railroad came through. Mail came daily and the isolation of the post was largely ended. The overland trail, with its busy season from April to September, was no more,

Dobytown was gone. The late sixties and early seventies saw but few men at the fort, and those few led lives devoid of danger. Even guard mount had lost its significance, a sure sign of decadence at any military post.

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APPENDIX I

From Fort to Farm

The abandonment of Fort Kearney in May, 1871, brought forth many proposals for the use of the ten square miles of Platte Valley land in the military reservation. Senator P. W. Hitchcock advocated that the Federal government turn it over to the state of Nebraska for the use of its eleemosynary institutions. Moses H. Sydenham, postmaster at Fort Kearney from 1858 to the abandonment of the office in 1871, and also editor of the Central Star, at Fort Kearney, made a proposal interesting but impossible.

Early in 1872, the year following the withdrawal of troops from Fort Kearney, Mr. Sydenham advocated the removal of the national capital from Washington to Fort Kearney. There had been, during the civil war period, considerable agitation for the transfer of the capital to a more central location in the United States. A number of cities, including Chicago and St. Louis, had been proposed. The idea came to Mr. Sydenham that he ought to advocate the Fort Kearney military reservation as the most suitable site for a new national capital.

Unfortunately the files of this publication have not been preserved, were they available they would be of the greatest value to an understanding of the history of Fort Kearney. Only a few clippings have come down to us, these

being in the files of the Nebraska State Historical Society at Lincoln. Clippings from the issue of April 5, 1872, set forth "a few benefits to be derived from relocating the national capital on the Fort Kearney Military Reservation in Nebraska - the Central State - in accordance with the proposition of Moses H. Sydenham".[1]

It proposed further "the creation of a large redemption Fund (for the redemption or reduction of the national debt), to be deposited in the national Treasury out of the proceeds of sales of New Washington city lots and auxiliary lands." The relocation of the capital would cause "the increase in value of real Estate and other property, throughout the whole Republic, by the development of the vast wilderness extending from the Gulf of Mexico on the South, to British America on the North." It would also bring about "the rapid settlement of the great garden plains lying between the Missouri River and the Rocky Mountains", and "the rapid settlement of the valleys of the mountains, and the development of our great western gold, silver, iron and coal interests".[2]

Mr. Sydenham thought that the public buildings in the old city of Washington could be used wisely. He advocated using the Capitol itself for a great national university and the other buildings for other institutions of learning, asylums for the widows of the Civil War, or hospitals for

disabled veterans. He also directed attention to the possibility that relocating the capital would hasten the return of a feeling of brotherly love between the sections of the country so recently at war with one another. Buildings in the new capital would be built out of the proceeds of the sale of lots and lands, without cost to the government, and with a surplus for the Federal treasury. Mr. Sydenham would look after the laying out of the city, the sale of the lands and lots, and the erection of the public buildings. His compensation was to consist of "one per cent of all money received for the sale of lots and lands outside of those for public use as stated".[3]

Seeking to interest Congress in the idea, Mr. Sydenham placed the matter before the Senators and Representatives, basing his proposition upon the following grounds:

"First. It would give an immense impetus to the development and settlement of the central plains of the republic, then unoccupied, as also of the great mountain regions of the West.

"Second. It would greatly stimulate the business of our Eastern cities, as all have grown up on the development of the West, and they would equally grow and thrive.

"Third. It would be a means of creating a new capital, more conveniently situated for all people, without any money expended, and also put money into the national treasury,

"Fourth. It would be entirely safe from bombardment by a hostile power, it having been destroyed once before and possible danger of a similar fate again.

"Fifth. It would draw closer together in bonds of harmonious unity all sections of the republic".[4]

Copies of the Central Star were sent to all members of Congress in an attempt to create sentiment for the proposal. A national capital removal convention was ewen held in Louisville Kentucky, to which Mr. Sydenham was appointed a delegate by Governor Robert W. Furnas. Nothing came of the agitation, however, the bill which was introduced into Congress being killed in committee. It was a grandiose scheme, too magnificent to be realized.

No further action was taken regarding the reservation until several years later. On December 6, 1873, General Orders No. 111, was issued from Army Headquarters, through the Adjutant General's Office. The order stated:

"The following Act of Congress is published for the information and government of all concerned: An Act to provide for the sale of the Fort Kearney Military reservation in the State of Nebraska.

"Wheras the tract of land in the State of Nebraska known as the Fort Kearney military reservation is no longer needed or used for military purposes, and had been abandoned by the military authorities: Therefore,

"Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That it shall be the duty of the Secretary of the Interior to cause said tract of land to be surveyed, sectionized, and subdivided as other public lands, and after said survey, to offer said land to actual settlers only at minimum price, under and in accordance with the provisions of the homestead laws: Provided, That if any person had made permanent improvements upon said land prior to the first day of June, eighteen hundred and seventy-six, (being an actual settler thereon,) has exhausted his right to make a homestead entry, such person, or his heirs, may enter one quarter section of said land under the provisions of the pre-emption laws: And provided further, That the heir of any deceased person who had made settlement and improvement as above described prior to June first, eighteen hundred and seventy-six, may complete the pre-emption or homestead entry of the person so deceased.

"Sec. 2. That the sum of three thousand dollars, or so much thereof as may be necessary, is hereby appropriated, out of any moneys in the Treasury not otherwise appropriated, for the purpose of carrying out the provisions of this act.

"Approved, July 21, 1876.

"By Command of General Sherman. E. D. Townsend, Adjutant General."[5]

In the spring of 1873, William O. Dungan, of Mercer

County, Illinois, made his first vtrip to Nebraska. He had seen active service in the Civil War and had been engaged in fine stock business and had suffered heavy losses during the depression years of the early seventies. On the way to Kearney he stopped at Lincoln to visit the state farm, where he hoped to learn something of the crops and livestock best suited to Nebraska. He also stopped at Crete and Hastings, en route, to look for a suitable location. While he was favorable impressed with the new country he did not find a quarter open to entry which exactly suited him. Being a cattleman, and used to fine stock, he was much surprised to find all breeds of cattle running together and seemingly without attention to the grading of the herds.

Lowell, Nebraska, but a few miles from the Fort Kearney military reservation, was his next stop. A land office was located there, it had four large hotels, five or six general stores, and many saloons. Here Mr. Dungan hired a team with which to look over the surrounding country. The team proved to be "western bronchos" and , since there were few roads in the region, considerable difficulty was experienced in traveling.

While on this tour of inspection Mr. Dungan drove through the military reservations, which had not yet been opened to settlement. He was much impressed by the land in river valley and especially by the luxuriant growth of blue-

grass on the site of the old fort. This grass had been sown around the officer's quarters and for pasture for the animals of the post, and had flourished. This thick growth gave the appearance of a rich, fertile soil.

Although the reservation had not been legally opened to settlement, a number of squatters were residing there. Sergeant John H. Holland, who had served in the Mexican War, and who had more recently been orderly sergeant at Fort Kearney, had squatted on the south-east quarter of section 21-8-15, and a man named Parker had likewise squatted on the adjoining quarter, the southwest of 22-8-15. Parts of these two sections comprised the site of the buildings of Fort Kearney and the buildings of the stage station to the west of the fort. Mr. Dungan saw the two squatters and asked them if they would sell their squatter's rights, for under the pre-emption law actual settlers could exercise prior right in the purchase of public land when opened to settlement, or could exercise prior right under the Act of Congress commonly known as the "Free Homestead Act". Both men expressed their willingness to dispose of their rights for one hundred and fifty dollars each. Mr. Dungan then purchased the squatter's right to both quarters.

Mr. Parker had built a frame shanty, ten by twelve feet, amid the fine cottonwood trees which had surrounded the old parade ground of the fort. Some of the old adobe buildings

available, and all of the wood nearby had been used by the troops, consequently the settlers had to provide themselves as best they could. Squaw corn was the solution of their fuel problem. Their food was simple but abundant. Wheat was taken to the nearby town of Gibbon where it was ground at the grist mill on a toll basis. Deer, antelope and prairie chickens were plentiful, and the rifle was depended upon to augment the meat supply. Water was secured by digging a shallow well which was cased by sinking three barrels. Life at the Dungan home was a pioneer one, but the family prospered from the first.

Under the Act of Congress, approved July 21, 1876, the Fort Kearney military reservation was resurveyed and opened to settlement. On February 15, 1878, Mr. Dungan filed application No. 4435, for the Southwest Quarter of Section 22, Township 8 North, Range 15 West, of the Sixth Principal Meridian,[6] under the Act of May 20, 1862. As he had served with the Thirtieth Illinois Infantry for a two year period (until discharged because of wounds) during the Civil War he was, by law, able to credit the time of his military service toward the five year period required for proving up on his homestead. On April 10, 1882, he received patent No. 2569, signed by President Arthur, conveying to him title to the quarter section of land upon which Old Fort Kearney was located.

were used for stables. Mr. Dungan lived in the shanty until the summer of 1875, when he began the construction of a two room house, sixteen by twenty-four. His wife and family, who had remained in Illinois, joined him in September.

During the threshing season of that year, the Ogalla Sioux had gone on the warpath in Hitchcock County, some one hundred miles southwest of the old military reservation and had set fire to the grass. The fire, driven by a hard wind, swept northeastward and struck the Platte Valley not far from old Dobytown. Mr. Dungan was threshing two miles west of his home, when he noticed the fire in the sand hills to the south. He cut his horses loose from the machine, just in time to save them, but lost his wheat and threshing machine in the flames. Fortunately the wind changed driving the flames back toward the burned over ground; thus he was able to save his house and furniture. The fire swept south to the Republican valley, carrying death and destruction in its wake.

The first crops which Mr. Dungan raised on his fort farm were wheat, oats and squaw corn. The latter was a hard, flinty corn, the ears of which were about sixteen inched long, but too hard for ordinary feed. He secured the seed from the soldier colony at Gibbon, and found that it yielded well on sod. It was used principally for fuel, the eard making a very hot fire. Buffalo chips were no longer

Having been a soldier himself, although never having been stationed at Fort Kearney, Mr. Dungan felt a sentimental attachment for the old post. His house was located among the old cottonwoods planted around the parade ground, and the trees planted by the soldiers furnished shade in his yard. He never permitted the old earthworks east of the fort buildings , and thrown up by Colonel Livingston in 1864, to be plowed up. He used that tract instead for pasture. When the Fort Kearney State Park was established in 1929, the location of the old powder magazine and earthworks were easily discernible, largely because of Mr. Dungan's sentimental attachment extending over a period of fifty years.

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APPENDIX II

The Fort Kearney Memorial Association

Interest in the site of Fort Kearney continued long after the fort had been abandoned. Scenes about the military post were still vivid in the memory of old settlers many years after the troops had been withdrawn, and often furnished the topic for reminiscence when those who had witnessed its stirring scenes chanced to meet. The fort site, with its blue-grass and large cottonwood trees planted shortly after the fort had been established, furnished an ideal picnic spot. Many meetings or picnics of pioneers and old settlers were held there. Many times the annual reunion of the Soldiers' Free Homestead Colony, which had settled around Gibbon, Buffalo County, Nebraska, in the early seventies, was held at this historic place. At the reunion of 1906 a movement was begun to secure the site for a national park. The matter was again discussed at a large old settlers picnic held at the fort site in August, 1910, but nothing came of this attempt.

Interest, however, did not entirely abate, and from time to time the subject was discussed by those interested. On September 5, 1923 Chris Anderson, J. S. Canady, Chris Howe, O. J. Lundeen and J. R. Maxon, of Kearney County; and John N. Dryden, Dan Morris and Peter Wink, of Buffalo County; and Dr. Addison E. Sheldon, Secretary of the Nebraska State Historical Society, met at Minden, Nebraska,

for the purpose of perfecting an organization to secure the site of the old fort. The name Fort Kearney Memorial Association was chosen and the object, as stated at this meeting was "the perpetuation and preservation of the Old Fort Kearney site as a patriotic and historic public park and the marking of the same by suitable monuments."[1]

It was voted to incorporate the association under the laws of the State of Nebraska. The capital stock was to be limited to 35,000 shares at one dollar each. Chris Anderson, of Minden, presided over the meeting. He appointed Dr. Sheldon and Charles A. Chappell, formerly State Senator and a prominent attorney of Minden, as a committee to draft the articles of incorporation. The meeting adjourned to meet October 4, at Minden.

At the meeting held October 4, seventeen persons from Buffalo and Kearney counties were present. Chris Anderson again presided and I.J. Thompson served as secretary. The articles of incorporation were presented, approved and signed by the seventeen present. Later, one hundred other prominent citizens of Buffalo and Kearney counties affixed their names, thus making one hundred seventeen signers to the articles. J. S. Canady, George P. Kingsbey, and J. R. Maxon. of Minden; C. P. Huntington, Dan Morris and Peter Wink of Kearney; and Colonel Thomas J. Majors, of Peru, Nebraska, who had served as an officer at Fort

Kearney, were elected members of the Board of Directors.[2]

The next meeting of the association was held at Kearney on May 15, 1923. At this meeting J. S. Canady, of Minden, was elected permanent chairman, Peter Wink, of Kearney, Vice President, Dan Morris, of Kearney, Treasurer, and Charles A. Chappell, of Minden, Secretary.[3] The Board of Directors met on June 18, 1923 and also on the following July 12. At these meetings "routine business was handled and discussion of most feasible plans to secure sufficient funds for purchase of site of old Fort Kearney were discussed but no definite action taken."[4]

The sudden death, on March 3, 1922, of William O. Dungan, owner of the quarter section of land upon which the fort stood, threw the land into litigation, making it impossible to do anything further toward the purchase of the tract until legal matters were adjusted. After July 12, 1923, since nothing further could be done toward the purchase of the site, the Board of Directors did not meet again until March 21, 1928, when a meeting was called at Minden.

Advertisements had appeared announcing that the quarter section of land upon which Fort Kearney stood was to be sold at Referee's sale in Minden May 17, 1928. The directors discussed the possibility of purchasing the site at the referee's sale. A committee consisting of Ray E.

Turner, Kearney, Chairman, George P Kingsley and C. S. Rogers, of Minden, and W. T. Souders and John Dryden of Kearney was appointed to examine the Articles of Incorporation and to recommend any changes which might be necessary to the carrying out of the plan to buy land. It appeared that no changes were necessary, however, as the articles were sufficient as originally drafted. At the meeting, also, the following directors were elected, J. S. Canady and O.J. Lundeen of Minden, John Dryden, L. D. Martin and W. T. Souders of Kearney, and Colonel Thomas J. Majors, of Peru, a director-at-large. It was also decided to hold a subscription dinner at the Fort Kearney Hotel at Kearney on April 26, the public to be invited, for the purpose of acquaintingthose interested with the plans of the association for the purchase of the fort site.[5]

This dinner was held as planned. A large crowd was present and all seemed enthusiastic for the proposal. Mr. Canady and several of the directors spoke, as did Dr. Sheldon of the State Historical Society. The latter reviewed comprehensively but briefly the history leading up to the establishment of Fort Kearney and spoke of the overland freight lines which made it imperative to locate a military post further west than the Missouri River. He told how all overland lines between the Missouri River and

Denver converged at Fort Kearney and used a chart which he had prepared to illustrate his talk. He also quoted numerous statistics to illustrate the enormousness of the westward movement past Fort Kearney. Considering the short time which Dr. Sheldon had, he gave his audience a very good conception of the modes of living, transportation, and other phases of early pioneer life.[6]

The next meeting of the Board of Directors was held at Minden, May 8, J.S. Canady was elected President, George P. Kingsley, Treasurer, and Wallace Thornton, Secretary of the Kearney Chamber of Commerce, was appointed secretary. It was decided at this meeting that the Association should confine its efforts to the purchase of the southwest forty acres only of the Fort Kearney site. President Canady, Treasurer Kingsley, Director Souders and Secretary Thornton were instructed to attend the referee's sale May 17, 1928, and bid on this land, using their judgement as to the reasonable and equitable amount.[7]

On May 17 the Association received the following letter from Mr. J. G. Lowe, President of the Farmers State Bank of Kearney: "I desire to inform you that in the event that I should be the successful bidder and should purchase the southwest Quarter of Section 22, Township 8, Range 15, in Kearney County, Nebraska, at the Referee's sale to be held in Minden on May 17, for sentimental reasons,

I will be happy to make a deed to the Fort Kearney Memorial Assiciation, Inc., for the Southwest forty acres of said land for one-fourth the amount of my bid on the whole of said quarter section, should said Association so desire."[8]

The Referee's sale was held and the appointed representatives of the Association were present and bid up to one hundred twenty-five dollars per acre for the southwest forty acres of the above named section. Mr. Lowe, however, bid one hundred thirty-five dollars an acre for the whole quarter, and his bid, being better, was accepted by the Referee. Mr. Lowe immediately conferred with the members of the Board of Directors for the purchase of the forty acres at one hundred thirty-six dollars per acre (the additional one dollar per acre being necessary to cover expenses actually incurred in the purchase). A contract was entered into with Mr. Lowe and machinery was set up to secure the $5,440 necessary to complete the purchhse. Mr. Lowe's generous action made possible the securing of title to the site by the Association at a very reasonable figure, for the southwest forty, bordering as it did on two highways, was the choice acreage of the quarter section.[9]

At first, consideration was given to the proposal that the State American Legion take over the campaign and make it a state-wide proposition. After conferring with

state Legion officials, who were very agreeable to the proposal, it was concluded that it would be better to secure the funds for the purchase of the site from citizens of the two counties--Buffalo and Kearney. The American Legion posts and the Chamber of Commerce of Minden and Kearney were quick to respond to this plan. The counties were organized at once and nearly $6,000 was realized by the sale of attractive certificates of stock at one dollar per share. An accurate record was made of every transaction and the accounts of both county drives balanced exactly. A number of certificates were purchased by citizens in other parts of Nebraska and in other states, but most of the stock was sold in Kearney and Buffalo counties.

As soon as the task of raising the required amount was finished Mr. Lowe deeded the site to the Fort Kearney Memorial Association. Steps were immediately taken to present the site to the State of Nebraska to be used for park purposes. Accordingly Representatives Ernest Peterson of Kearney County and Fred A. Mueller and J. D. Saunders of Buffalo County asked Dr. Sheldon to draft a bill for them to present at the 1929 session of the Legislature. Then the bill was introduced jointly be the three representatives and was numbered House Roll No. 372. It was entitled "A Joint and Concurrent Resolution accepting the tender of the Fort Kearney Memorial Association of Buffalo

and Kearney Counties, of the site of Old Fort Kearney to the state Park Board, as a gift for use as a State Histoical Park, and pledging the responsibility of the State of Nebraska for its maintenance." The preamble consisted of eleven paragraphs each beginning with "Whereas" and briefly outlined the history of Fort Kearney. The enacting clause was the following: "Be it enacted by the House of Representatives of the State of Nebraska, the Senate concurring: Section 1. State to Maintain -- That, upon delivery to the secretary of the State Park Board of the proper legal instruments, conveying title of said tract of forty acres to the State of Nebraska, which title shall be properly authenticated and approved as to form by the Attorney General of the state, the State Park Board shall take over and maintain the said property as a State Historical and Scenic Park and Bird reserve."[10] The bill passed the house on February 27, by a vote of sixty-eight to three,[11] and the senate on March 18, twenty-seven to three,[12] and was approved by Governor Arthur J. Weaver, on March 26, 1929.

It was not until December 13, however, that the state formally took over the site of Fort Kearney. On that day Governor Weaver arrived in Kearney at 11 A. M. accompanied by Frank B. O'Connell, secretary and warden, Guy Spencer, of Omaha, and George Dayton, of Lincoln, member of the

State Game, Forestation and Parks Commission. At noon a luncheon was served at the Fort Kearney Hotel attended by the Governor, Warden O'Connell, Commissioners Spencer and Dayton, W. W. Johnson, President Kearney Chamber of Commerce, J. S. Canady of Minden, president, and Wallace Thornton, secretary of the Fort Kearney Memorial Association; John Dryden, W. T. Souders and L. D. Martin, directors of the association. A number of newspaper men were also present, making the number thirteen all told. After the luncheon a short business session was held.

President Canady, of the Memorial Association, served as chairman of the business session. Those members of the association called upon to speak expressed the purpose of having the fort site restored and suggested in this work that a museum be included in the program where historical relics connected with early day development of the state might be preserved.

Governor Weaver spoke in behalf of the Parks Commission, voicing the sentiment that he was firm in the belief that the fort site should be restored and assured members of the commission that every effort would be put forth to provide the necessary means. He also said that he was heartily in accord with the work being done by the Fort Kearney Memorial Association, and that it was a pleasure for him, as governor, to sign the bill passed by the

legislature in March which officially presented the fort site to the state as a park of the park system.

"It is one of our duties as public officers to preserve the history of pioneer settlers here and those that passed through our state in their push toward the frontiers," continued the governor. "The commission is very sympathetic with the work of the association and while I am not in a position to say what will be done with the tract of land, I can assure you gentlemen that it will be given every consideration."[13]

At the conclusion of the luncheon the governor and visitors were taken by automobile to the fort site. After spending a short time examining the grounds the party went to a central part of the site and stood upon the sod covered breastworks of Old Fort Kearney.

"It is our duty to present as well as future generations to preserve this historic tract, and it affords me much pleasure to present to you for the use of the state of Nebraska the deed to this tract of land," Mr. Dryden said.

He stood facing the governor. A chill north wind whipped across the tree covered tract while the eleven other men stood with heads bared witnessing the history making event.

"It is a great pleasure personally to accept this deed and thereby this historical tract," the governor responded,

as he took the deed presented by Mr. Dryden.

The work of the Fort Kearney Memorial Association was accomplished, the site of Old Fort Kearney had become a state park, dedicated forever to the people of the state of Nebraska.

On Sunday, July 3, 1932, more than 5,000 people gathered at the Fort Kearney State Park to witness the unveiling of a monument erected there by the Veterans of Foreign Wars. The weather was ideal; bright, but not too warm, and people came for miles around to attend the program. A large portion of the southern edge of the park grounds was set aside as a parking place for the hundreds of automobiles of the visitors. Detachments of Kearney national guard companies were on duty to assist in the orderly parking of the cars, and their uniforms gave a military air to the occasion, seeming quite appropriate at the site of an old military post.

The principal speaker of the day was the venerable old gentleman beloved by all Nebraskans, Colonel Thomas J. Majors, of Peru. Colonel Majors was then past eighty years of age, but alert and active despite his years. He had served as a lieutenant-colonel of the First Nebraska Cavalry stationed at Fort Kearney and had thus been a part of the life of the Old fort. In his address, which was amplified so that even the very edges of the large crowd

gathered about the speakers stand could hear, he told of his experiences at the post. He related in clear and forceful language some of the important events in which he had had a part. He told of his having been detailed to the command of the garrison at Plum Creek, a sub-post of Fort Kearney, some thirty five miles westward. His memory of the Indian depredations about that post was very clear and he related most interestingly the scenes he had witnessed. The vast throng stood with rapt attention throughout the Colonel's address; here was the account of an eye-witness.

The widow of Major John Talbot, who had been with her husband at Fort Kearney during the years immediately following the Civil War, was also on the platform. She was called upon for a few remarks, and told of the old fort as she remembered it. A number of old settlers were seated on the platform, and they were introduced to the audience.

After the exercises at the speakers stand, which was located amid the giant cottonwoods near the old parade ground, the people moved a short distance eastward to the old earthworks to view the new fifty-foot flag pole which had been erected by the Veterans of Foreign Wars and to witness the unveiling of the nine foot granite monument also erected by them. As the covering was released there

was revealed the beautiful stone with the following inscription:

IN HONOR OF THE
SOLDIERS AND PIONEERS OF
FORT KEARNEY
ESTABLISHED 1848
DISCONTINUED 1871
ERECTED BY
DAVID A. RHONE POST 759
VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS
1933

It was a fitting memorial, and appropriately marked the site of Old Fort Kearney.

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6. Kearney Daily Hub, Friday, April 27, 1928.
7. Minutes, Fort Kearney Memorial Association, op.cit., May 8, 1928.
8. Files, Fort Kearney Memorial Association.
9. Interview with Secretary Wallace Thornton, April 2, 1934.
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11. House Journal, Legislature of Nebraska, 45th Session, p. 881.
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13. Kearney Daily Hub, Saturday, December 14, 1929.
14. Ibid.
15. Kearney Daily Hub, July 5, 1932.

APPENDIX III

Commanding Officers At Fort Kearney

Lt. Col. Ludwig E.Powell	Sept.15,1847	Oct.28,1848
Capt. Charles F. Ruff	Oct. 28,1848	May 30,1849
Bvt. Lt.Col. Benj. L.E. Bonneville	May 30, 1849	July 16,1849
Bvt. Maj. R.H. Chilton	July 16,1849	Oct.19,1850
Capt. Henry W. Wharton	Oct. 19,1850	June 18,1854
1st Lt. Henry Heth	June 18,1854	June 14,1855
Maj. Albemarle Cady	June 14,1855	Aug.24,1855
Capt. Thomas Hendrickson	Aug. 24,1855	Oct.19,1855
Capt. Henry W. Wharton	Oct. 19,1855	Apr. 6,1857
1st Lt. William D. Smith	Apr. 6,1857	June 6,1857
1st Lt. Elisha J. Marshall	June 6, 1857	Mar. 6,1858
Capt. John P. McCown	Mar. 6, 1858	July 22,1858
Bvt. Col. Charles A. May	July 22,1858	Nov. 3,1858
Maj. William W. Morris	Nov. 3, 1858	July 8,1859
Bvt. Col. Charles A. May	July 8, 1859	Aug. 4,1860
Capt. Alfred Sully	Aug. 4, 1860	Sept.11,1860
Capt. Frederick Steele	Sept.11,1860	Oct. 20,1860
Col. Dixon S. Miles	Oct. 20, 1860	Apr. 15,1861
Capt. Chas. H. Tyler	Apr. 15,1861	May 13, 1861
1st Lt. Brockholst Livingston	May 13,1861	June 24,1861
Capt. E.W.B. Newby	June 24,1861	Dec. 21,1861
Capt. John A. Thompson	Dec. 21,1861	June 21,1862
Col. Edmund B. Alexander	June 21,1862	Apr. 30,1863

Col. William F. Sapp	Apr. 30,1863	Oct.1,1863
Maj. John S. Wood	Oct. 1,1863	July 18,1864
Col. Samuel W. Summers	July 18,1864	Aug. 27,1864
Lt. Col. William Baumer	Aug. 27,1864	Oct. 1,1864
Capt. Lee P. Gillette	Oct. 1,1864	June 13,1865
Lt. Col. William Baumer	June 13,1865	July 18,1865
Capt. E.B. Murphy	July 18,1865	Oct. 15,1865
Capt. Charles Fisher	Oct. 15,1865	Nov. 26,1865
Capt. George O. Sokalski	Nov. 26,1865	Dec. 11,1865
Col. Henry B. Carrington	Dec. 11,1865	Apr. 5,1866
Lt. Col. William Baumer	Apr. 5,1866	June 24,1866
Lt. Col. H.W.Wessells	June 24,1866	Oct. 6,1866
1st Lt. Charles E. Dibble	Oct. 6,1866	Nov. 21,1866
Capt. Arthur McArthur	Nov. 21,1866	Dec. 4,1866
Col. John Gibbon	Dec. 4,1866	May 16,1867
Lt. W.L. Foulk	May 16,1867	Oct. 4,1867
Bvt.Maj. Alexander J. Dallas	Oct. 4, 1867	May 20,1868
Bvt. Col. Dunbar R. Ransom	May 20,1868	Oct. 16,1868
Bvt. Maj. William Sinclair	Oct. 16,1868	Nov. 11,1868
Capt. Reuben M. Fenton	Nov. 11, 1868	June 15,1869
Capt. Edwin Pollock	June 15,1869	May 17, 1871

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